

COLORADO'S TORTILLA CURTAIN:  
INVENTING A BORDERLAND AT THE JUNCTION OF TWO WESTS

by  
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## ABSTRACT

In the high desert of southern Colorado a no man's land of sand and sagebrush separates not only two cities but also two radically different Wests. To the north is Colorado Springs and the Anglo Rocky Mountain West, a West of postcard-perfect resorts, modern architecture, high-tech industries, sprawling suburbs, white collars, and mega-church Protestantism. To the south is Pueblo and the Hispanic Southwest, a West of flat deserts and wind-whipped sagebrush, Indians, Mexicans, enormous prisons, ancient adobe ruins, and Roman Catholics. Residents of Pueblo refer to this boundary, corresponding to the Pueblo-El Paso county line, as the "Tortilla Curtain," a poignant reference to the international border between the United States and Mexico.

This dissertation seeks to explain the interplay of space, environment, and culture that led to the creation, enforcement, and normalization of Colorado's Tortilla Curtain, a broad band dividing the state north and south—a kind of internal international border born of myth, custom, and practice that created and sustained profound social, political, and racial inequalities. Colorado's Tortilla Curtain was an invention of the late nineteenth century, a conception of Anglos seeking both to understand dramatic changes in the landscape and imbue those changes with powerful moral and economic values. In the twentieth century, labor, ethnic, and racial violence in southern Colorado led to the policing of the boundary as Coloradans increasingly saw the Tortilla Curtain as a divide between white and brown. The expansion of federal funding and power in the West during the Great Depression and World War II normalized these perceived differences and enforced them with changes in the built environment.

Ultimately these differences in government investment on either side of the Tortilla Curtain portrayed Pueblo as an ancient relic of a mythological Mexican past while Colorado Springs rose to become the state's preeminent showplace for sleek, space-age modernity. The city became a prototype of the affluent Rocky Mountain resorts of outdoor leisure that defined the state in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, Pueblo remained a gritty industrial city and home to one of the most diverse ethnic and racial populations in the West. Despite being Colorado's second-largest city for most of its history, Pueblo—like much of southern Colorado—became incompatible with popular portrayals of the Centennial State.

This dissertation engages several historical fields, including borderlands, the American West, urban history, environmental history, and architectural history. Because a border and borderland are primarily spatial phenomena, this dissertation relies on analyses of the natural and built environments, particularly architectural analysis. It also promotes the significance of secondary cities in environmental and urban history.

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## INTRODUCTION

### AMERICA THE INCOMPLETE

At 14,114 feet above sea level, the air grew dangerously thin, depriving the brain of oxygen and the extremities of warmth.<sup>1</sup> Travelers who crossed above tree line reported feeling disoriented, nauseated, and fatigued. Their heads pounded as their respiratory rates increased. Yet a few experienced a sense of incomparable exhilaration, a sharpening of consciousness as their brains channeled scarce oxygen to the most important neurological functions. The occupants of a small wagon felt all these various symptoms as they bumped along the rough trail to the Gate-of-Heaven and reached the summit of Pikes Peak after an arduous morning's journey.<sup>2</sup> It was Saturday, July 22, 1893, and among that group was a thirty-three-year-old English professor from Wellesley who, after trips to Europe and the Middle East, decided to spend a summer touring the United States on her way to teach a three-week summer course at Colorado College, in Colorado Springs. Along the way she stopped at Niagara Falls and reveled in the awesome display of nature's power. In Chicago, she strolled beside the lagoon at the center of the magnificent Court of Honor—the so-called White City—at the World's Columbian Exposition. The splendor of the Beaux Arts fantasy led her to proclaim that “All men were poets for one brief, bright space / In the White City.” She even found inspiration in the endless Kansas

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<sup>1</sup> At sea level, the percent of effective oxygen in the air is 20.9. It is only 12.3 percent at 14,000 feet above sea level. See “Altitude-Oxygen Chart,” *Higher Peak Altitude Training*, accessed November 8, 2016, <http://www.higherpeak.com/altitudechart.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this dissertation I use the United States Geological Survey's official punctuation of Pikes Peak, without the apostrophe, unless the apostrophe is used in a direct quote.



Figure I.1. A circa 1905 view of Pikes Peak looming over downtown Colorado Springs. At center is the second Antlers Hotel, constructed in 1901 after a fire destroyed the original building in 1898. Postcard from the author's collection.

wheat fields as her train sped westward toward Colorado and the looming profile of the mountain she would later conquer.<sup>3</sup>

Yet nothing in her extensive world travels moved Katharine Lee Bates like those few moments at the summit of Pikes Peak. From there she could survey an immense and highly varied landscape 160 miles in any direction, providing a visual summary of her American grand tour: mountains and plains, cities and countryside, East and West. In a state of pure ecstasy, perhaps hypoxic euphoria, Bates saw the vastness of that scene as a symbol of the limitless potential of the United States and proof of the role of providence in its success. Her head throbbed with inspiration. “The opening lines of a hymn floated into my mind,” she later recalled. When Bates returned to her room at the elegant Antlers

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<sup>3</sup> Lynn Sherr, *America the Beautiful: The Stirring True Story Behind Our Nation's Favorite Song* (Cambridge, Mass.: PublicAffairs, 2001), 23–29, 32–34.



Hotel, in Colorado Springs, she wrote in her diary, “‘Pike’s Peak or Bust.’ Most glorious scenery I ever beheld.”<sup>4</sup> Then she took out her notebook and began to write:

O beautiful for halcyon skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties  
Above the enameled plain!<sup>5</sup>

“America the Beautiful” would become one of the country’s most beloved patriotic anthems, transforming Pikes Peak, already among the preeminent natural landmarks in the United States, into “America’s Mountain.” Yet as a record of Bates’s own experience at the summit, the poem was woefully incomplete. Bates chose to overlook a scene she could not have missed from the lofty summit that fateful Saturday. Only forty-five miles to the south-southwest was a place where the skies were hardly halcyon and the city far from gleaming alabaster. This was not the White City of the World’s Fair. Instead, thick, black, sulfurous smoke from hundreds of chimneys and smokestacks filled the air and trailed for miles to the east (Figure I.2). There, straddling the Arkansas River, was Pueblo, Colorado’s second-largest city and home to one of the most ethnically and racially diverse populations in the West. As the site of numerous smelters, a fledgling steel mill, and all manner of heavy manufacturing, the city smugly wore the title, “Pittsburgh of the West.” And Pueblo had every reason to be proud: In many ways the city literally built the American West, supplying steel rails, nails, and barbed wire.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 34–35.

<sup>5</sup> Katharine Lee Bates, “America. A Poem for July 4th,” *The American Kitchen Magazine* 7 (1897): 151.



Figure I.2. Smokestacks, not mountains, serve as the background for images of Pueblo, including this early twentieth-century postcard of Pueblo's notorious Union Avenue. Postcard from the author's collection.

"America the Beautiful" did not have room for Pueblo and, in many ways, neither did Colorado. Despite being the second largest city for much of the state's history, Pueblo suffered from a tendency to drop off the map—in some cases quite literally. At her house in northern Colorado, my sister-in-law proudly displays on her couch a novelty pillow with a map of Colorado embroidered onto it (Figure I.3). In cheerful colors and fanciful fonts are cities from Denver to Steamboat Springs, Fort Collins to Durango. Colorado Springs dominates the entire bottom right corner of the pillow with depictions of snowy Pikes Peak and a soaring Air Force fighter jet. Yet Pueblo is absent, forced off the map by apparently more interesting places—places a bit more "Colorado." A postcard from the 1950s (Figure I.4) sends "Greetings from Pueblo, Colorado." In a style typical of the era's postcards, each of the large letters spelling "PUEBLO" contains an image of a tourist attraction. But upon closer inspection, the "P," "E," and "L" are all landmarks in

Colorado Springs, not Pueblo. The “U” depicts the Mount of the Holy Cross, nearly 180 miles to the northwest, and the “B” is Royal Gorge, over fifty miles away, near Cañon City. In fact, only the “O” depicts a scene from Pueblo: a vista of slag heaps and the stacks of the steel mill.



Figure I.3. This novelty pillow leaves no room for Pueblo, while Colorado Springs and its tourist attractions dominate the southeast corner of the state. Pillow by catstudio; photo by the author.

Pueblo vanished from the map of Colorado because of a tear in the landscape, an interior borderland of sand and sagebrush that separates not only two of the state’s largest cities but also two radically different Wests. To the north is Colorado Springs and the Anglo Rocky Mountain West, a West of luxurious resorts and outdoor leisure, high-tech industries and universities, sprawling suburbs, white skin and collars, and mega-church evangelical Christianity. To the south is Pueblo and the Hispanic Southwest, a West of



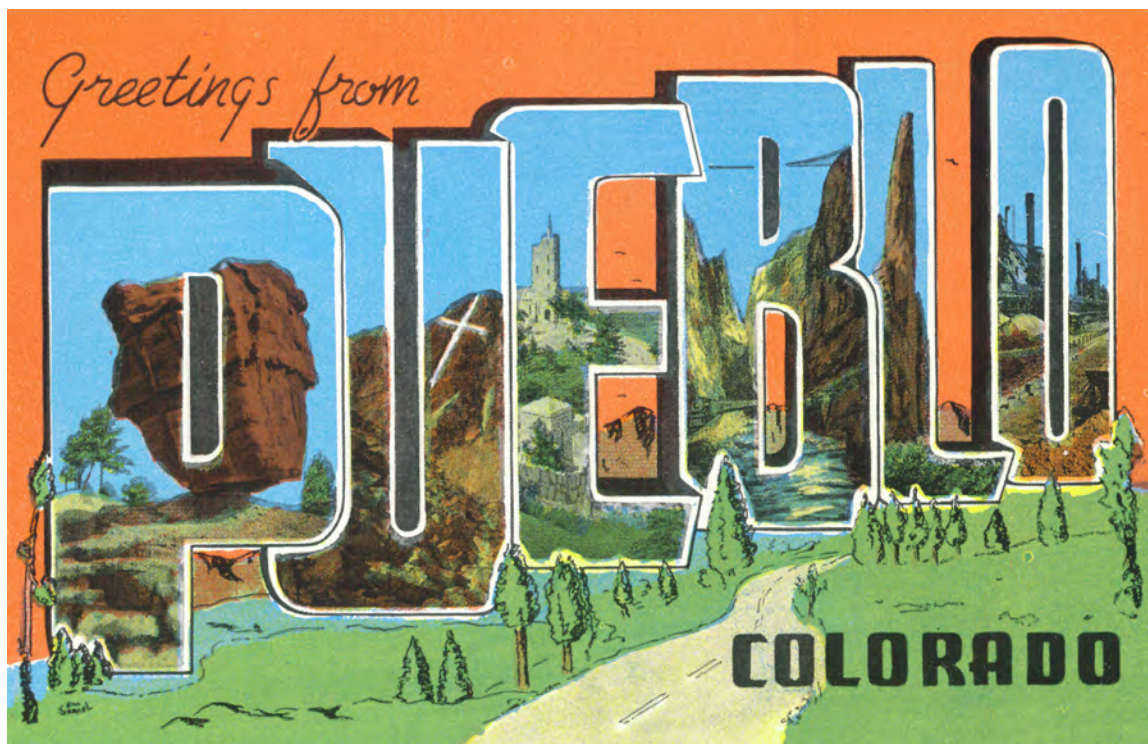


Figure I.4. Among the attractions pictured in this 1950's-era postcard only one is actually in Pueblo. "P" is the Balanced Rock, Garden of Gods, in Colorado Springs. "U" is the Mount of the Holy Cross. "E" frames the Will Rogers Shrine, also in Colorado Springs. "In the "B" is the suspension bridge over Royal Gorge, near Cañon City. "L" is Montezuma Temple, Garden of the Gods, Colorado Springs. Only "O" depicts a scene from Pueblo: the slag heaps and stacks of the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's Minnequa Steelworks. Postcard from the author's collection.

deserts and sagebrush, Indians, Mexicans, prisons, dusty adobe and rusting steel, and Roman Catholics. Colorado place names say it all. To the north are Denver, Boulder, Greeley, and Aspen, Pikes Peak and Mount Evans. To the south are Trinidad, La Junta, Alamosa, and Durango, the Spanish Peaks and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Residents of Pueblo refer to this boundary, usually identified as the Pueblo-El Paso county line, as the "tortilla curtain, because there is a big difference between the upstanding Protestant Whites in Colorado Springs, and the blue-collar Catholic ethnicities in Pueblo," observes Mike Tedesco in his autobiographical critique of urban

planning in Colorado.<sup>6</sup> In some ways, Tedesco's definition by class and religion is apt. A pair of small, unremarkable signs accompanies the standard-issue county line markers along Interstate 25, the principal north-south freeway connecting Colorado's Front Range cities. As a motorist travels northbound into El Paso County, toward Colorado Springs, a sign designates the road as the Ronald Reagan Highway; southbound into Pueblo County the same road is the John F. Kennedy Memorial Highway.<sup>7</sup>

Yet Tedesco's definition of "Tortilla Curtain" overlooks its poignant racial and spatial implications. The phrase "Tortilla Curtain" originally referred to the U.S.-Mexico border. Author T.C. Boyle popularized the expression in his 1995 novel *The Tortilla Curtain*. In many ways the fictional account parallels the division between Colorado Springs and Pueblo. For Boyle, the Tortilla Curtain separates a newly gated subdivision of affluent whites from undocumented Mexican workers living in a squatters' camp in the ravine below.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the phrase implies the existence of a space intended to contain a suspect other, in this case Latinos.

It was in this sense, as a kind of interior border, that I first encountered the phrase "Tortilla Curtain." While serving as an adjunct lecturer at Colorado State University-Pueblo, I asked students in my architectural history and historic preservation course why so few of the university's Latino graduates worked in cultural resource consulting and the

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<sup>6</sup> Mike Tedesco, *City Boy: Urban Planning, Municipal Politics, and Guerrilla Warfare* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Sunstone Press, 2009), 146.

<sup>7</sup> For a pertinent discussion of this cultural boundary, see Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), chap. 7.

<sup>8</sup> For example see Thomas Torrans, *Forging the Tortilla Curtain: Cultural Drift and Change Along the United States-Mexico Border from Spanish Conquest to the Present* (Fort Worth, Texas: Texas Christian University Press, 2000); T. Coraghessan Boyle, *The Tortilla Curtain* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995). Boyle employs the metaphor of a projected wall around a gated community meant to protect it from an adjacent shantytown of Mexican migrants.

related state bureaucracy. In my opinion, preservation practice in the state suffered from a gross lack of expertise in dealing with Hispanic resources in southern Colorado. The students responded by pointing to the Tortilla Curtain: Pueblo's Latinos could not find opportunity north of the county line. Thus, they remained. To me, as a middle-class white male living at that time in northern Colorado, what was forty miles of unremarkable desert was to them an insurmountable gulf between a world they understood and in which they were accepted and an utterly foreign land.<sup>9</sup>

This perception of foreignness shapes the biases of Anglos on the north side of the Tortilla Curtain as well. One of the most telling examples is an episode of the irreverent animated series *South Park*. In "The Losing Edge," the boys from South Park, a fictionalized portrayal of a real place in Colorado, try their hardest to lose Little League playoffs to enjoy what was left of their summer vacations. Written by series' co-creator and Colorado native Trey Parker, the episode reduces each of the playoff cities to their stereotype. In Fort Collins, the scenery is park-like, with mature trees, snow-capped mountains, and large houses, a nod to the university town's solid white, middle-class identity. In Greeley, the background changes from mountains to silos, feedlots, and slaughterhouses. The city is notorious for its enormous meatpacking and food processing operations. And while Greeley has a large and prominent Hispanic population, the animators depicted the crowd as entirely white. However, when the team arrives south of

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<sup>9</sup> Colorado State University-Pueblo, known formerly as the University of Southern Colorado and Southern Colorado State University has a long history of sizeable Latino enrollment. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education designated the school a Hispanic Serving Institution in recognition of its Hispanic student population exceeding twenty-five percent. For more history, see Henry E. Trujillo, "Factors Influencing the Attrition of Mexican American Students at the University of Southern Colorado" (Dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 1981); "History of Colorado State University," *Colorado State University-Pueblo*, accessed April 10, 2013, <http://www.colostate-pueblo.edu/about/Pages/History.aspx>.

the Tortilla Curtain, in Pueblo, the skin tones of fans become notably browner, much like the scenery in the background. The vignette opens with a sign duct-taped to a fence, reading “*Bienvenidos A Pueblo, Colorado,*” as the umpire yells “strike *tres.*” Meanwhile, the father of one of the South Park players, who revels in inciting father-to-father fisticuffs in each playoff game, must consult what is presumably a translating dictionary, with the Mexican flag on it, to trash his rivals: “*¡Pueblo no bueno! ¡Pueblo es muy mal!*”<sup>10</sup>

I seek to explain the interplay of space, environment, and culture that led to the creation, enforcement, and normalization of Colorado’s Tortilla Curtain, a broad band dividing the state north and south—a kind of internal international border born of myth, custom, and practice that creates and sustains profound social, political, and racial inequalities. The Tortilla Curtain is less a line than an idea imprinted upon a broad swath of prairie, high desert, and mountains roughly corresponding to latitude 37.5 degrees north. At times this boundary has been a physical feature, often the Arkansas River, or a geopolitical construction, notably the county line. But it is not the product of formal political negotiation, the convenience of governance, or of any official survey; neither ancient cairns nor modern signposts define its edges. Regardless of its actual location, the Tortilla Curtain shifts the dominant cultural, political, and economic orientation of Colorado ninety degrees, a formidable task for a state divided physically east and west—Great Plains and Rocky Mountains—by the dramatic and abrupt rise of the Front Range, with its wall of granite peaks surpassing 14,000 feet in elevation.

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<sup>10</sup> Trey Parker, “The Losing Edge,” *South Park* (Comedy Central, April 6, 2005).

Colorado's Tortilla Curtain was an invention of the late nineteenth century, a conception of Anglos seeking both to understand dramatic changes in the landscape and imbue those changes with specific and quite powerful moral and economic values. It was an idea steeped in whiteness and manifest destiny that promoted the area north of the Tortilla Curtain as a place of enlightened leisure, awe-inspiring beauty, and miraculous healing. But to the south was aridity, sagebrush, and adobe dirt, an expendable landscape for heavy, polluting industries, and the less-desirable, less-white people who toiled within them. This conception manifested itself physically as the built environments of the border cities—Pueblo and Colorado Springs—began to diverge, especially in the early twentieth century. The massive influx of federal spending in the West beginning with the Great Depression further funded this mythmaking through architecture, ultimately painting Pueblo as some ancient relic of the Mexican past and Colorado Springs as the state's preeminent showplace of sleek, space-age modernity.

Because of the spatial implications of the Tortilla Curtain, I rely heavily upon comparative interpretations of the built environment, especially architectural analyses of buildings and landscapes. I approach the built environment as material culture—buildings and landscapes as artifacts. Individual buildings to entire cities are texts, recording the cultural, political, and economic circumstances in which people constructed them. Architect Amos Rapoport, one of the founders of Environment-Behavioral Studies, describes the built environment as a form of “nonverbal communication.” “[M]eaning is not something apart from function, but is itself a most important aspect of function,” he writes. “In fact, the meaning aspects of the environment are critical and central, so that the physical environment—clothes, furnishings, buildings, gardens, streets,



neighborhoods, and so on—is used in the presentation of self, in establishing group identity..., and in the enculturation of children....”<sup>11</sup> In comparing these cities and understanding the boundary between them, I take as my starting point Dolores Hayden, who at the “intersection” of cultural geography and architecture with urban social history finds the history of the cultural landscape, “the production of space, human patterns impressed upon the contours of the natural environment. It (the history of a cultural landscape) is the story of how places are planned, designed, built, inhabited, appropriated, celebrated, despoiled, and discarded. Cultural identity and social history are here intertwined.”<sup>12</sup> I embrace a reciprocal relationship between people and the environment. As geographers Michael Dear and Jennifer Wolch point out (and as Hayden echoes), “...social life structures territory...and territory shapes social life.”<sup>13</sup>

The built environment is central to the four interrelated historical fields in which I situate this dissertation: the American West, borderlands, environmental history, and urban history.

### **American West: Boundary-Making and Mythmaking**

Boundaries defined the West and shaped its natural and built environments. Borders, boundaries, and grids of land surveys delimited the old and new, good and bad. “Before they put a grid over it, and restrained the ground from indifference, any place was as good as any other,” observes writer D.J. Waldie, “The grid is the plan above the

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<sup>11</sup> Amos Rapoport, *The Meaning of the Built Environment: A Nonverbal Communication Approach* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1990), 15, 177.

<sup>12</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), 15.

<sup>13</sup> Jennifer R. Wolch and Michael J. Dear, “How Territory Shapes Social Life,” in *The Power of Geography: How Territory Shapes Social Life* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 4.

earth. It is a compass of possibilities.”<sup>14</sup> An analysis of boundaries is fundamental to the history of the American West. As historian Patricia Nelson Limerick put it in her wonderful synopsis of Western history, *The Legacy of Conquest*:

Western history is a story structured by the drawing of lines and the marking of borders. From macrocosm to microcosm, from imperial struggles for territory to the parceling out of townsite claims, Western American history was an effort first to draw lines dividing the West into manageable units of property and then to persuade people to treat those lines with respect.<sup>15</sup>

Historian Derek R. Everett goes further, arguing that boundaries served as the very genesis of the West. “Transcontinental expansion in the nineteenth century did not create the American West,” he posits in his monograph *Creating the American West: Boundaries and Borderlands*. “It was the act of drawing lines to shape polities modeled upon the eastern states the made the West truly American.”<sup>16</sup>

Colorado looms large in Everett’s study because its rigidly rectangular shape imposed over some of the most dramatic and varied topography on the continent serves as an ultimate expression of geopolitical abstraction. This “triumph of geometry over geography,” found its most extreme expression in the creation of the Colorado-New Mexico border, a line of political expediency that completely ignored cultural and environmental realities. In 1859, Anglo gold seekers created the Jefferson Territory, delimiting its southern boundary at the thirty-seventh parallel rather than the more northerly thirty-eighth parallel or the Arkansas River. As a result, Hispano settlers in northern New Mexico suddenly found themselves in an Anglo-dominated state.

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<sup>14</sup> D. J. Waldie, *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 3–4.

<sup>15</sup> Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Derek K. Everett, *Creating the American West: Boundaries and Borderlands* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 4, 17.

Colorado's southern border then became "a much more significant obstacle" and an "inconvenient barrier between 'two distinct civilizations.'"<sup>17</sup> As landscape architect and historian John Brinckerhoff Jackson points out, in ignoring topographical and cultural realities, the boundary-makers of the nineteenth-century West created the exact circumstances needed for the invention of cultural borders like the Tortilla Curtain. These improvised boundaries of practice or perceived necessity, then, often became more "real" than legislated borders. The implications of these boundaries are profound. "We would all agree that insofar as every landscape is a composition of spaces it is also a composition or web of boundaries," Jackson writes. "...In the contemporary Western world, we assume that a boundary is the point (or line) of contact between two defines spaces, a way of regulating contact and communication with neighbors, even while it protects us against invasion or unwanted entry."<sup>18</sup>

Among the first historians to recognize that the area "generally south of the Arkansas River" extending to the New Mexico state line was culturally and historically different from the rest of the state was journalist and popular historian Ralph C. Taylor, who collected his essays in the 1963 volume *Colorado South of the Border*. A longtime reporter and news director for the *Pueblo Star-Journal* and the *Pueblo Chieftain*, Taylor painted an ambiguous picture of the area. Many of his essays portray southeastern Colorado as the preeminent setting for classic Old West legends and tropes: cowboys and Indians, trappers and traders, Mexicans and Mormons, and of course plenty of dastardly outlaws. But Taylor also leaves space for the urban and industrial realities of Pueblo,

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 10, 171; Michael P. Conzen, ed., *The Making of the American Landscape*, Reprinted (New York: Routledge, 1994), 313.

<sup>18</sup> John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 13–16.

which he lauds for its “cosmopolitan population of more than 30 races.” Unlike many other Colorado scholars at the time, Taylor did not write off Pueblo as merely a extraterritorial Mexican city.<sup>19</sup>

A more scholarly approach to much of the same period and geography Taylor covers is historian Janet Lecompte’s epic *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn: The Upper Arkansas, 1832–1856*. While brilliant in its research and lively in its storytelling, the monograph inadvertently perpetuates two myths about early Pueblo that had significant ramifications for the city in the twentieth century. First, Lecompte describes the construction of the original adobe Pueblo trading post using Spanish terms: *placita* (small, enclosed square), *horno* (beehive-shaped, adobe oven); *jaspe* (whitewashed plaster for interior rooms) and *colchones* (New Mexican wool mattresses). “The Pueblo was less a fort than a typical New Mexican country house, built as a center for agriculture and husbandry, and for family life,” she writes. “The *placita* had many uses.”<sup>20</sup> While technically accurate, these terms may or may not have been used by the occupants of the fort. It was, after all, an American trading post with a complex ethnic population. Lecompte later quotes Indian trader Rufus Sage who reports that the fort was home to “ten or twelve Americans, most of whom are married to Mexican women.”<sup>21</sup> Later travelers reported Indians, French, and Mormons at the fort. Second, Lecompte compares the trading post to Taos Pueblo, in New Mexico, despite the fort having nothing in common with the ancient structure other than its adobe construction method, thus

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<sup>19</sup> Ralph C. Taylor, *Colorado South of the Border* (Denver, Colo.: Sage Books, 1963), 13–14.

<sup>20</sup> Janet Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn: The Upper Arkansas, 1832–56* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 47–51.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

inadvertently connecting nineteenth-century Pueblo to the ancient Native American past.<sup>22</sup>

As seen in Taylor and Lecompte, mythmaking becomes inextricably tied to boundary-making. I seek to intervene in Richard White's concept of imagined or mythic Wests and manifest it spatially, locating these Wests upon the landscape, defining their edges, and determining the implications of the boundaries between them. As White argues...

The imagined West is a mythic west. In its everyday colloquial sense, myth means falsehood. ...In a second, deeper sense, however, myths are not so much falsehoods as explanations. Myths are the stories that tell why things and people are what they are. ...Myths give meaning to the world. In this sense a myth about the West is a story that explains who westerners—and who Americans—are and how they should act.<sup>23</sup>

If these myths really have the power to define who Americans are and how they should act, then establishing the boundaries between these Wests becomes a crucial, high-stakes contest. Because the possibilities of the imagined Rocky Mountain West are significantly different from those of the imagined Southwest, much is to be gained or lost when defining and enforcing the border between them. Moreover, as historian William Cronon points out, these myths have the power to become self-fulfilling feedback loops, as this dissertation explores.<sup>24</sup>

And that gain or loss is related to another set of Wests: the old and the new. The Tortilla Curtain is interesting because it not only divides the West spatially but also

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>23</sup> Richard White, *"It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West"* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 615.

<sup>24</sup> William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (March 1992): 1347–76.

temporally and economically. The myth of the Rocky Mountain West—the West of Colorado Springs, Denver, Boulder, and Fort Collins—embraces without hesitation the past, present, and future. It is a West that has space for both rodeos and rockets, cowboys and computer scientists. But the myth of the Southwest—the West of Pueblo, Taos, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque, makes no such accommodation. It is an imagined West stuck in the past, where the juxtaposition of adobe and cottonwood to glass and steel is incongruous. Worse, its brown-skinned residents, particularly those of Mexican and Native American descent, become unwitting actors in a perpetual historical pageant but find no role in the present or future. People and peoples become trapped in time because these myths of the West carry specific expectations. “...[W]e ought to rethink a particular history of expectation,” argues historian Philip Deloria, because “expectations are almost invariably raced, classed, and gendered. They can be colored by religious practice and by regional location, touched by sexuality, transformed by national difference and global exchange.”<sup>25</sup>

The creation of the Tortilla Curtain was first and foremost an act of shaping expectations. In large part informing these expectations was a project that began in the latter half of the nineteenth century but blossomed at the turn of the twentieth century to “whitewash” the Southwest’s Mexican heritage. What was “Mexican” and therefore, as Anglos saw it, racially inferior, dirty, and dangerous, became Spanish, which was European, romantic, safe, and most importantly, white. The artifacts of the built environment are particularly good records of this transformation. The project was so successful that a number of mythical or heavily romanticized architectural styles evolving

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<sup>25</sup> Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 7–8.

in the Southwest, particularly in southern California, spread eastward, notably the Mediterranean Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, Pueblo Revival, and Monterrey.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, I argue that Westerners in certain geographies could choose to embrace the mythical Southwest when it benefited them. Thus, certain Front Range cities like Colorado Springs and even Denver often claim a Southwestern mantle; People in Pueblo, however, are unable to share in this dual identity.

### **An Internal Borderland**

If the Tortilla Curtain is a kind of border based on myth and, later, practice, then Colorado Springs and Pueblo are border cities occupying a borderland. U.S. borderlands history usually concerns itself with the cities, states, and regions immediately adjacent to the country's international borders. Disproportionately the scholarship has concentrated on the southern border with Mexico. While this dissertation is not borderlands history in a conventional sense, it attempts to expand the literature by suggesting that the characteristics of an international border may be found hundreds of miles from the border itself, existing on a scale of magnitude somewhere between the formal international boundary and T.C. Boyle's fictionalized geography of the gated community.

Perhaps the most applicable borderland history is historian Monica Perales's *Smeltertown*, which chronicles the history of ethnic Mexicans who labored in the

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<sup>26</sup> Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997); William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

smelters of El Paso, Texas, the largest city along the Texas-Mexico border. Interestingly, the American Smelting and Refining Company, which operated the El Paso smelters, shared the same management and investors as the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company, and both companies had extensive mining and refining interests in southern Colorado, including Pueblo, as well as Old and New Mexico. Particularly interesting is the way in which these Mexican families created a community identity, despite the realities of life in a company town in a foreign country, similar to the Mexicans who settled in CF&I's company towns at its coal mines and at the Minnequa Steelworks, in Pueblo.<sup>27</sup>

The process of creating and negotiating identity and community, despite an international border, consumes much of the borderlands literature. One particularly apt study is Anthony Mora's *Border Dilemmas*, which traces the evolution of two ethnically Mexican towns created in the wake of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, one north and one south of the new international border. The town in Mexico, Mesilla, initially booms then falters and decays. The town in the United States, however, Las Cruces, New Mexico, sustained its growth and thrived. At the core of Mora's study is a question that looms over my dissertation as well: "[H]ow could [there] be so many different ideas about Mexican and American national identity in such a small community?" Chapter III, in particular, attempts to address this question.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps of great applicability is the New Mexican borderlands literature, including monographs such as John R. Van Ness's *Hispanos in Northern New Mexico* and Charles Montgomery's *The Spanish Redemption*, as well as the essays in Phillip

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<sup>27</sup> Monica Perales, *Smeltertown: Making and Remembering a Southwest Border Community* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Anthony Mora, *Border Dilemma: Racial and National Uncertainties in New Mexico, 1848-1912* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), 4.



Gonzales's *Expressing New Mexico*. An intervention of my dissertation is an attempt to extend the borderlands beyond New Mexico's northern state line and, in a larger sense, beyond any of the states immediately adjacent to the international border. And taking the New Mexico literature a step further is important because Hispanic inhabitants historically and currently make little distinction of the rather arbitrary Colorado-New Mexico state line; the Tortilla Curtain is far more real and restrictive.<sup>29</sup>

Yet understanding Colorado's Tortilla Curtain as a border presents a conceptual problem. As historian and journalist Thomas Torrans argues in *Forging the Tortilla Curtain*, cities on either side of an international border are better connected to each other than to more distant cities in their respective countries. Thus border cities tend to be more alike each other. "The border towns achieve their individuality not so much because of their common distribution along the boundary but rather because of a lack of some more closely linking networks," Torrens writes. "They are points upon an arbitrary fixation, not stops along some functionally economic scheme."<sup>30</sup>

But Colorado Springs and Pueblo are two very different cities. Tucked into the lush, green, rolling foothills flanking Pikes Peak, Colorado Springs is a city of corporate high rises and sprawling suburbs, home to one of the largest concentrations of evangelical mega churches in the United States. The city maintains an astonishing assortment of parks and open space, including one of Colorado's most frequented tourist destinations,

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<sup>29</sup> John R. Van Ness, *Hispanos in Northern New Mexico: The Development of Corporate Community and Multicommunity* (New York: AMS Press, 1991); Charles Montgomery, *The Spanish Redemption: Heritage, Power, and Loss on New Mexico's Upper Rio Grande* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2002); Phillip B. Gonzales, ed., *Expressing New Mexico: Nuevomexicano Creativity, Ritual, and Memory* (Tuscon, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> Torrans, *Forging the Tortilla Curtain*, 21.

the Garden of the Gods, a canyon punctuated by otherworldly, pink granite rock formations. It is a city of leisure, serving as the primary gateway to the numerous parks, resorts, and attractions in the Pikes Peak region, including the opulent Broadmoor Hotel and Resort. The Springs also hosts a thriving high-tech defense industry, supporting operations at Fort Carson, Peterson Air Force Base, the United States Air Force Academy, and most notably, the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), with its legendary nuclear bomb-proof facility tunneled deep beneath Cheyenne Mountain, a foothill of Pikes Peak.

Pueblo, immediately south of the Tortilla Curtain, is much hotter and drier than Colorado Springs, occupying a stretch of high plains nearly forty miles distant from the foothills; the enormous, rusted hulk of the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's (CF&I) Minnequa Steelworks, rather than snow-capped peaks, dominates the horizon. The city is compact and modest, with few recent subdivisions and no concentration of high rises. From its inception to its peak in production in the 1950s, the steel mill, Colorado's largest private employer, hired tens of thousands of immigrants from across the globe, particularly from southern and eastern Europe, the Far East, and Mexico, providing Pueblo with one of the most diverse populations of any city in the West; Pueblo is still renowned for its unique cuisine, a fusion of northern Mexican and eastern European traditions, prominently featuring the Pueblo green chili, grown throughout the Arkansas valley. The city's hinterland continues to host an assortment of land-intensive federal facilities of staggering size, including the Pueblo Ordnance Depot, bombing ranges for Fort Carson, the Department of Transportation's High Speed Ground Test Center, and the Government Printing Office's Federal Consumer Information Center.

## **Labor, Landscapes, and Environmental History**

Because Pueblo and Colorado Springs are so different from each other, the Tortilla Curtain must be more than just a border. Indeed, the cities differ from typical border towns in that forty miles of vast, open space, varying from foothills to flat desert, separate them. I argue that a confluence of federal land policy, notions of property rights, and natural aesthetics—a culturally constructed preconception of the use and usefulness of land—underlie the differences between Colorado Springs and Pueblo. As nineteenth-century novelist and Colorado Springs pioneer Helen Hunt Jackson put it, “climate is fate.” From the historic Glen Eyrie manor to the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs and from the Minnequa Steelworks to the High Speed Ground Test Center in Pueblo, the twin issues driving development have been the availability of vast swaths of land and its perceived natural beauty. The rectangular survey and the homestead acts of the nineteenth century inherently made land more valuable north of the Arkansas River. Conversely, the organic boundaries and vastness of the Mexican land grants south of the Arkansas rendered the land less precious or at least more complicated to acquire since it did not exist in easily purchased portions. Moreover, the landscape of the Pikes Peak region, with its snow-capped mountains, lush foothills, and the sublime beauty of the Garden of the Gods, fit perfectly with Euro-American aesthetics of the nineteenth century, particularly as expressed in the Hudson River School. Meanwhile, the flat, arid desert of Pueblo, far removed from the mountains, was an alien landscape, like so much of the Southwest; it was not inspirational or even comfortable. To complicate the issue, Mexicans and Native Americans in the territory expressed very different ideas of

property rights and natural aesthetics, often at odds with Anglo settlers. This was not the mythic West. As Patricia Limerick put it, “[Frederick Jackson] Turner’s frontier had no relevance to Hispanic borderlands history; Turner himself showed little awareness of the Hispanic people’s existence.”<sup>31</sup>

These value judgements of the landscape have resulted in environmental inequalities, particularly in terms of resource allocation and disaster protection, that have perpetuated the Tortilla Curtain. Analyses of these kinds of inequalities, generally focusing on race, gender, and class, pervade the literature. One of the pioneering texts is Andrew Hurley’s *Environmental Inequalities*, which investigates the realities of industrial pollution on Gary, Indiana’s, working-class black population.<sup>32</sup> The situation was similar for poor Latinos in Pueblo, particularly for those downwind and downstream from the smelters and steel mill in Goat Hill and Salt Creek, some of the poorest and most polluted neighborhoods in Colorado. I suspect the decision to move the chemical weapons stock from the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, in Denver, to the Pueblo Ordnance Depot had much to do with political impotence and expendable populations. Similarly, when Fort Carson added hundreds of thousands of acres of live-ammunition training grounds and bombing ranges, they were all situated in the semi-arid expanses south of the Tortilla Curtain.

The inequality is even more striking when it comes to water, the single most divisive resource in the West. The massive postwar suburban development in Colorado Springs required the diversion of thousands of acre-feet of west-slope water. Inevitably,

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<sup>31</sup> Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 253.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980*, First Edition (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

much of that water ended up in the Springs' sewerage treatment plant, which emptied into Fountain Creek, upstream from Pueblo. That sewage discharge increased the volume of Fountain Creek so much that it exceeded the Arkansas River's average flow and made the creek more prone to flooding.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the Army Corps of Engineers beefed up flood control protection along the west bank of the creek, in place since the 1920s, to prevent downtown Pueblo from flooding. Yet the federal government consistently rejected efforts to provide the same protection on the east bank, allowing Pueblo's largely Hispanic, working-class East Side neighborhood to flood regularly until 1987; the existing protections on the east bank remain substandard.<sup>34</sup>

Further aggravating the environmental inequalities were the significant labor problems south of the Tortilla Curtain—labor largely committed to the commodification of natural resources, particularly coal. Indeed, the Colorado Coal Wars, especially the Ludlow Massacre and its aftermath, dominate historical scholarship in the geography of southern Colorado. The Colorado Coal War was the deadliest labor dispute in American history and pitted the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company against immigrant laborers in the coalfields between Pueblo and northern New Mexico. Much of that scholarship focuses on the significant class differences in the state at the turn of the twentieth century. Among the most notable work in this vein is journalist Scott Martelle's popular history *The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West*. Martelle hints at one of the major themes of this dissertation: that the creation of the old West/new West myth of

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<sup>33</sup> Downtown Pueblo has a long history of flooding, most notably in 1921 when much of the commercial district was destroyed (see chapter three). Because of the catastrophe, the Army Corps of Engineers moved the channel of the Arkansas River southward about a half mile.

<sup>34</sup> Jeffrey DeHerrera and Adam Thomas, *A Place Set Apart: The History and Architecture of Pueblo's East Side Neighborhood* (Estes Park, Colo.: Historitecture, 2009), 7–11.

Colorado left little space for the industrial realities of Pueblo and the southern Colorado coalfields. “One archaeologist involved in a project at the site [Ludlow] reported being interrupted by tourists attracted by highway signs announcing a historical marker, only to be disappointed to learn that the Ludlow Massacre had nothing to do with Native Americans.”<sup>35</sup> The implication was clear: the tourist’s expectations and experiences in Colorado included Native American sites, even ones with a dark past, while the state’s industrial and ethnic history remained a disappointment, perhaps even irreconcilable with those expectations.

Even the preeminent scholarly treatment of the Colorado Coal Wars, Thomas G. Andrews’s *Killing for Coal: America’s Deadliest Labor War*, recognizes the discrepancy between expectation and reality in Colorado. Taking an urban center-hinterland environmental history approach in the mode of William Cronon’s *Nature’s Metropolis*, Andrews argues that the eruption of labor violence was not as sudden and unprecedented as it seemed. Instead, it simmered below the ground, where Colorado’s peculiar geology and the ethnic composition of miners “fomented decades of militancy.”<sup>36</sup> Yet like Martelle, Andrews recognizes that the West and industrialization were incongruous terms. As Andrews observes, “Popular myths and scholarly interpretations of the past of the American West have left little place for coal, coal miners, and coal-powered industrialization.”<sup>37</sup> While it certainly does not fit the mythical or imagined model of Turner’s Frontier Thesis, the settlement of the West, at least the Anglo settlement of the

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<sup>35</sup> Scott Martelle, *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 8–9.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America’s Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 16.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

West, was largely a process of very heavy and very dirty industry. (One only needs to think of the railroads.) Colorado Springs helped fund that transformation and Pueblo stood at its center.<sup>38</sup> I seek not just to merely recognize this incongruity in expectations, but to understand its roots and ramifications.

And despite this uptick in scholarly interest surrounding the Colorado Coal Wars and its legacy, Pueblo and Colorado Springs remain strangely unstudied. Most of this scholarship tends to treat Pueblo and Colorado Springs as mere set pieces, wayside stations on the hurried rush to get to the metropolis: Denver (or even Chicago, San Francisco, or New York). But Colorado's secondary cities loomed large in the Coal Wars. After all, most of that coal ultimately headed for the hungry blast furnaces at the Minnequa Steelworks, in Pueblo, and striking miners acquired most of their weapons and materiel from the city's hardware stores, which were all too willing to profit from the violence. Meanwhile, Colorado Springs, despite its relative calm, shared in the bloodshed as the home of so many capitalists and investors with ties to mining and heavy industry south of the Tortilla Curtain.<sup>39</sup>

### **Urban History and the Metropolitan Turn**

This dissertation advances the metropolitan turn in urban history, considering the city center, urban neighborhoods, suburbs, exurbs, and hinterlands as a single and protean organism. The approach sees each of the component parts locked in cultural, economic, and political contestation. The turn is not so much concerned solely with urban decline or

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<sup>38</sup> Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America*, Reprint (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> Martelle, *Blood Passion*, 71, 102–3.

the rise of suburbs, as the earlier literature of urban history had been, but with the interaction between the two. Thus the factors that allowed suburbs to exert their pull came from an intentional, powerful, and well-organized political base that rivaled and perhaps exceeded the push factors from the urban core.<sup>40</sup>

A larger purpose and project of this dissertation is to interrogate and complicate a concept that dominates urban-environmental history, especially the urban history of the West in light of the Metropolitan turn: niche cities. Cronon's *Nature's Metropolis* firmly planted the concept of metropolis and hinterland in environmental history, even dredging up Johann Heinrich von Thünen's nineteenth-century model of the "Isolated State," concentric rings of hinterland in support of the metropolis at its center.<sup>41</sup> "Hinterland" implies an economic, cultural, and political connection to (even mutual dependency upon) a specific urban center. At its core, the hinterland serves as the site of the commodification of nature for the benefit of capitalists in the metropolis. Thus with the growth of the agricultural commodities market and the expansion of the railroad, the Illinois backcountry became the Chicago hinterland. As historian Carl Abbott puts it in *How Cities Won the West*, the frontier becomes hinterland upon its "incorporation...into the system of modern capitalism" embodied in the metropolis.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Notable examples include Kevin Kruse's *White Flight*, which explains the rise of conservatism in the political interplay of the city center and suburbs in Atlanta, and Robert Self's *American Babylon*, which traces not just the rise of white conservatism in suburbs around Oakland but militant Black Nationalism in the urban neighborhoods. See Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 2007); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>41</sup> William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 48–49.

<sup>42</sup> Abbott, *How Cities Won the West*, 33.



In the hinterland model, smaller cities within the concentric rings serve as satellites, offering specific functions or niches in support of the metropolis. This model dominates the recent urban and environmental history of Colorado, most notably in Kathleen A. Brosnan's *Uniting Mountain & Plain* and James Earl Sherow's *Watering the Valley*. Brosnan skillfully applies Cronon's environmental-urban model to Denver, which "quickly emerged as a 'nature's metropolis'"<sup>43</sup> Brosnan suggests that distinctive bands of economic, cultural, and political influence extended from the three major Front Range cities (Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo) westward to sites of resource extraction and tourism in the mountains themselves. Thus, one traveling through the central and western sections of Colorado could find places that were culturally and spatially similar to Denver, or Colorado Springs, or Pueblo.

Yet in addition to commodifying its extensive and highly varied hinterland, Denver maintained its dominance in the Rocky Mountain West by manipulating relationships with other population centers. "Hierarchical relations with other cities and towns defines Denver's ascendancy as much as its control of resource-rich hinterlands," Brosnan writes. "Colorado Springs and Pueblo, for example, sometimes competed with Denver to control certain sectors of an increasingly integrated, specialized regional economy, but more frequently filled roles that complemented the primary entrepôt."<sup>44</sup> Colorado Springs created "a valuable niche," by serving as the state's principal tourist attraction. Denver ultimately benefitted because it "became the transfer point for visitors

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<sup>43</sup> Kathleen A. Brosnan, *Uniting Mountain & Plain: Cities, Law, and Environmental Change along the Front Range* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

seeking the natural wonders of Colorado and the Rocky Mountains.”<sup>45</sup> Brosnan argued that Pueblo came closest to competing with and even toppling Denver’s power in the region by filling the heavy industry niche. Yet in the end Pueblo only “supplemented the activities of the metropolis [Denver].”<sup>46</sup>

In Sherow’s history of irrigation along the Arkansas River, these urban niches become ineluctable. Like Andrews, Cronon, and Brosnan, the critical environmental problem his three subject cities (Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and Garden City, Kansas) face is the commodification and privatization of natural resources, in this case water, one of the scarcest resources in the arid West. Yet Sherow argues that Colorado Springs and Pueblo exhibited marked differences in securing water rights and building irrigation infrastructure due to their specific niches or functions. “As in Pueblo, the water system of Colorado Springs also operated to provide for urban growth,” he writes. “But a difference in niche and economics made this city’s drive to develop its water system much more aggressive than Pueblo’s”<sup>47</sup>

Yet niches are necessarily reductive and determinist constructs, I argue, worthy of interrogation. The idea tends to simplify or even ignore the complexities of secondary cities, confirming rather than critiquing prevailing historical narratives. This dissertation seeks to complicate the concept of niche cities, especially in the context of urban and environmental history, and recover secondary cities from the conceptual tyranny of the metropolis, captured as they are on the web of von Thünen’s “Isolated State.” Reducing secondary cities to their relationship with the metropolis or to their place in

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 91–92.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>47</sup> James Earl Sherow, *Watering the Valley: Development along the High Plains Arkansas River, 1870-1950* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 1, 59.

environmentally determined schemes tends to neglect the quite powerful social, cultural, political, and economic realities that led to the creation of those niches. This dissertation will show that while the roots of these niches are historically quite deep, actors have contested their creation and subsequently struggled to redefine them for decades. Even in cases in which the apparent niche and actual identity of a city, if such a thing can be determined, are similar, that identity did not come about easily. Rather it was the result of willful decisions, counter protests, violence, and in some cases, the heavy involvement of the state and federal government on scales well beyond the metropolis.

Thus I desire to promote the importance of smaller cities in urban historical scholarship, which has largely concerned itself with the country's biggest metropolitan areas. New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles dominate American urban history. So voluminous is the scholarship, so all-consuming the subjects, that critics often hail monographs about other major metropolitan areas, such as Boston, New Orleans, Detroit, Atlanta, and San Francisco, simply because they decenter the big three. And to an extent the criticism is just: by their size alone these enormous cities are more atypical than typical. Geographer Pierce Lewis argues, "throughout most of our history...a good share of the country and a good share of the country's leadership lived in that nebulous but unmistakable class of urban phenomena which we call 'small towns.'"<sup>48</sup> Moreover, in their respective metropolitan contexts, these small cities were important commercial, political, and cultural centers in their own rights. As Catherine Tumber points out in her monograph of small, industrial cities, "Although it might be hard to imagine for those whose memories don't stretch back that far, downtown Syracuse—like downtowns in

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<sup>48</sup> Peirce F. Lewis, "Small Town in Pennsylvania," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 62, no. 2 (June 1, 1972): 323.

most other postwar smaller industrial cities—had much the feel of today’s midtown Manhattan. *Don’t laugh.*”<sup>49</sup>

Certainly many historians and geographers have rediscovered small cities with varying levels of success. Lewis, for instance, argues that small towns represent centralizing points that when taken together create regions—the vast spaces between, but not necessarily related to, the metropolises. Eric Morser contends that urban historians who neglect second- and third-tier cities tell an incomplete story. For him, the labor disputes that tore apart Chicago and St. Louis also played out in profound and important ways in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Similarly, Jefferson Cowie locates small, industrial cities such as Camden, New Jersey, and Bloomington, Indiana, on the frontlines of economic globalization. As Sara Igo points out, Muncie, Indiana, as “Middletown,” represented the average city—supposedly the very epitome of “typical” American life. And for Antony Lukas, the small town of Caldwell, Idaho (population 46,273 in 2000), was the scene of an assassination that implicated organized labor, progressivism, and the fairness of the American judicial system in an epic struggle for the very “soul of America.”<sup>50</sup>

Further, the logic of the metropolitan turn, I argue, demands that historians pay more attention to small cities because expanding the parameters of the study area changes the playing field, particularly in terms of population. For instance, the 2010 census

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<sup>49</sup> Catherine Tumber, *Small, Gritty, and Green: The Promise of America’s Smaller Industrial Cities in a Low-Carbon World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012), xv. Emphasis original.

<sup>50</sup> Lewis, “Small Town in Pennsylvania”; Eric Morser, “A Hinterland Cauldron: Workers, Politics, and the Remaking of a Midwestern City,” *Journal of Urban History* 37, no. 5 (2011): 710–31; Jefferson Cowie, *Capital Moves: RCA’s Seventy-Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999); Sarah Elizabeth Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007); J. Anthony Lukas, *Big Trouble: A Murder in a Small Western Town Sets Off a Struggle for the Soul of America* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

ranked Denver as the undisputed largest city in Colorado at 600,158 people; Colorado Springs came in second with 416,427. (Pueblo was seventh at 106,595,) Yet Denver is a combined city and county. Thus comparing apples to apples, counties to counties, El Paso County had 622,263 people, making it the most populous in Colorado. Granted, even the county model fails to account for entire metropolitan areas, which are difficult to define and may consume several counties.<sup>51</sup> But even so, the combined population of my Colorado Springs-Pueblo study area rivals the population of the Denver metropolitan area. Second cities are important in their own right, not just as niches in support of the metropolis.<sup>52</sup>

The four chapters that follow investigate the creation, contestation, and normalization of Colorado's Tortilla Curtain. The first chapter begins in the second half of the nineteenth century and traces the evolution of rhetoric and convention in explaining the landscapes of Pueblo and Colorado Springs. It primarily focuses on early Anglo travel writers conveying their experiences to Eastern readers, ultimately shaping expectations. In these early narratives, Colorado Springs shines as a city of wealth and health while Pueblo is depicted as hard working yet dirty and foreign.

The second chapter reveals that those attempts to define the Tortilla Curtain and shape expectations did not go uncontested. The subjects of this chapter are two unusual building projects that represented opposing sides of the gold standard-free silver debate

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<sup>51</sup> For instance, would a scholar use Census Bureau-defined metropolitan statistical areas or self-defined planning models, such as regional councils of government?

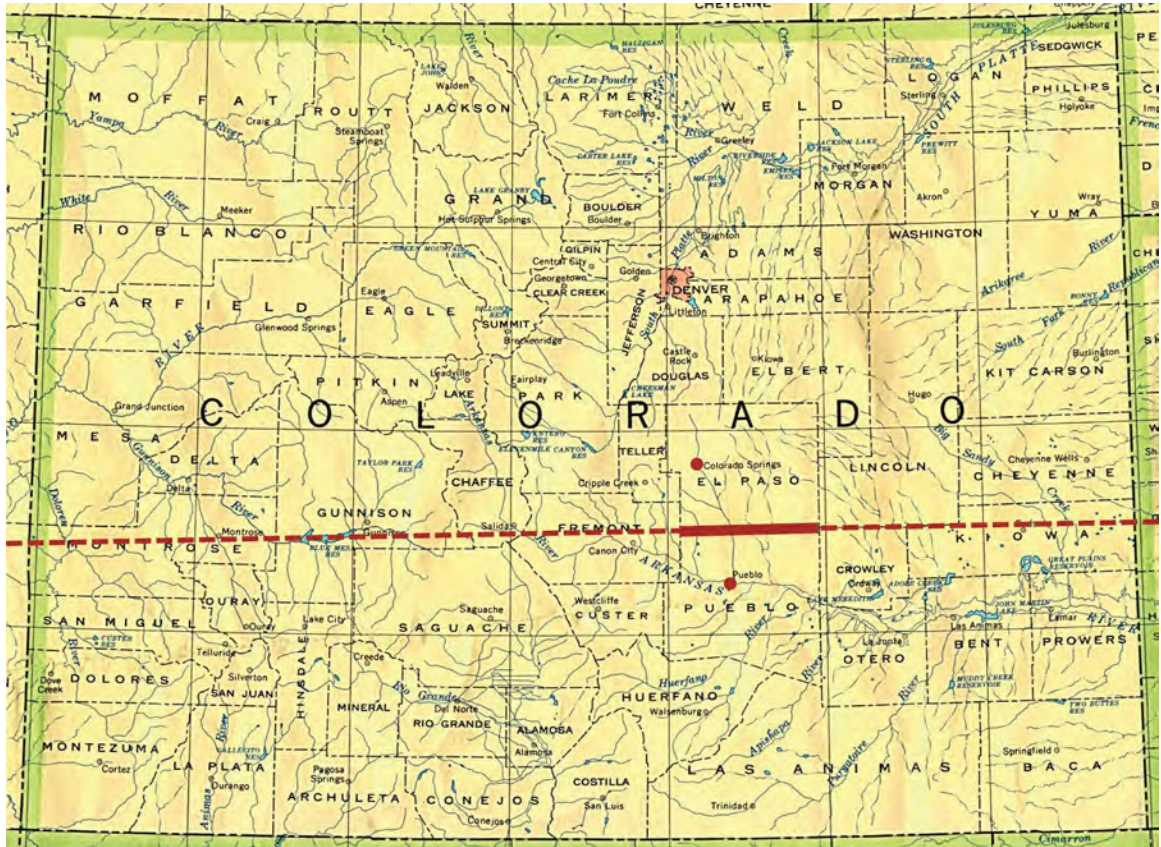
<sup>52</sup> Colorado Department of Local Affairs, State Demography Office, "Population Data," *Colorado Department of Local Affairs-Population Data*, accessed April 25, 2013, <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/DOLA-Main/CBON/1251593300013>.

that tore apart the West. In Colorado Springs, the “sun palace” of Cragmor Sanatorium promoted the earlier rhetoric of Colorado Springs as a site of leisure and healing for the moneyed elite. Pueblo, on the other hand, openly embraced free-silver populism with the Colorado Mineral Palace. The enormous exhibition hall was an attempt to create a tourist attraction in Pueblo on par with Colorado Springs’s natural amenities. Yet the subsequent failure of the Mineral Palace and proliferation of upper-class resorts and health spas only exaggerated the gulf between the cities and firmly defined the Tortilla Curtain as a boundary between labor and leisure.

In chapter three, the realities of racial and ethnic violence of the early twentieth century redraw the Tortilla Curtain as a militarized border. As the most ethnically and racially diverse city in Colorado, Pueblo was a city in which residents crafted and contested identities and prejudices in the first two decades of the new century, boiling over like much of the rest of the country in 1919. The violence threw Pueblo into an international incident that seemed to confirm the suspicions of many Anglos to the north: Pueblo was just an extension of Mexican territory. The response from Colorado Springs was to deride its sister city and fortify the county line.

In the final chapter, the federal government, through New Deal construction programs and wartime investment, remade Colorado Springs and Pueblo in ways that reflected and normalized the rhetoric of landscapes and identity. In Colorado Springs, federal money helped fund a campaign to construct modern architecture in the city. In turn, the city increasingly looked to the federal government, rather than to its numerous philanthropists, as the source all future growth. In Pueblo, on the other hand, New Deal construction projects defined an architectural style that resigned the city to some ancient

Southwestern past. With the war, Pueblo County became an expendable landscape for training and bombing, while Colorado Springs became one of the West's most important centers of the postwar military-industrial complex.



Map I.1. The Tortilla Curtain corresponds to the El Paso-Pueblo county line. I have also highlighted the locations of Colorado Springs and Pueblo with red dots. Colorado county map from Wikimedia (public domain).



## CHAPTER 1

### “A SEMANTIC DIFFICULTY:” INVENTING THE RHETORICAL LANDSCAPE OF SOUTHERN COLORADO



Figure 1.1. Sara Jane Lippincott, also known as Grace Greenwood, in 1850. Wikimedia (public domain).

“The sunset was the most joyous I ever beheld, wrapping that vast congregation of peaks and domes in unimaginable, almost intolerable, splendor; and all the while, in the eastern sky, was a wondrous display of storm-clouds, lightning and rain-bows. Such a grand combination show I never before beheld in any theatre.” Her first glimpse of Pikes Peak emerging from the clouds left Sara Jane Lippincott (Figure 1.1) awestruck. In the summer of 1872, the pioneering journalist, social reformer, and women’s rights activist, better known by her

*nom de plume* Grace Greenwood, journeyed from Denver to Pueblo. She was among the first of thousands to experience the landscape in an entirely new way, unimaginable even a few weeks earlier: from the comfort of a brand new Denver & Rio Grande Railroad coach. She also represented the vanguard of elite, white easterners who flooded the Pikes Peak region via the new railroads and published their experiences in memoirs and newspaper columns.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Grace Greenwood, “Homeward Journey—Colorado Revisited,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1872, 5.

A *New York Times* correspondent, Greenwood found the area around Colorado Springs “the most picturesque portion of Colorado, outside the mountains.” She described the area with reverential, spiritual language that would define the area’s popular landscape narratives for decades. She reveled in the “cathedral-like” monoliths of the Garden of the Gods: “They always look so solemn and worshipful, and there is certainly no hollow mockery of religion about them.” Her journey to the Iron Spring at adjacent Manitou Springs approached nirvana. “I should haunt *that*—should camp beside it, were I spending the Summer in this grand half-way heaven of pure air and pure water, and tenderly tempered sunshine.”<sup>2</sup>

But Greenwood’s jubilation dropped precipitously when she reached her excursion’s southern terminus in Pueblo. After stops in Greeley, Golden, and Denver, where she raved about improvements and beautifications, Pueblo was a disappointment. “The town has picturesque surroundings, but lacks trees, gardens, and pleasant, home-like places sadly.” Despite her displeasure, Greenwood was impressed with the prowess and potential of Pueblo’s residents; what the city lacked in beauty it made up for in sheer ambition. Recalling the banquet in her honor at Pueblo, she quipped, “I am persuaded that a future Governor stood more than once behind my chair, and that a Senator’s wife brought me ice-cream.”<sup>3</sup>

Yet it was the landscape that overwhelmed Eastern writers, and while much of it remained unexplored, one aspect of the territory’s geography was certain: The state consisted of two distinctive halves: the Great Plains to the east and the Rocky Mountains

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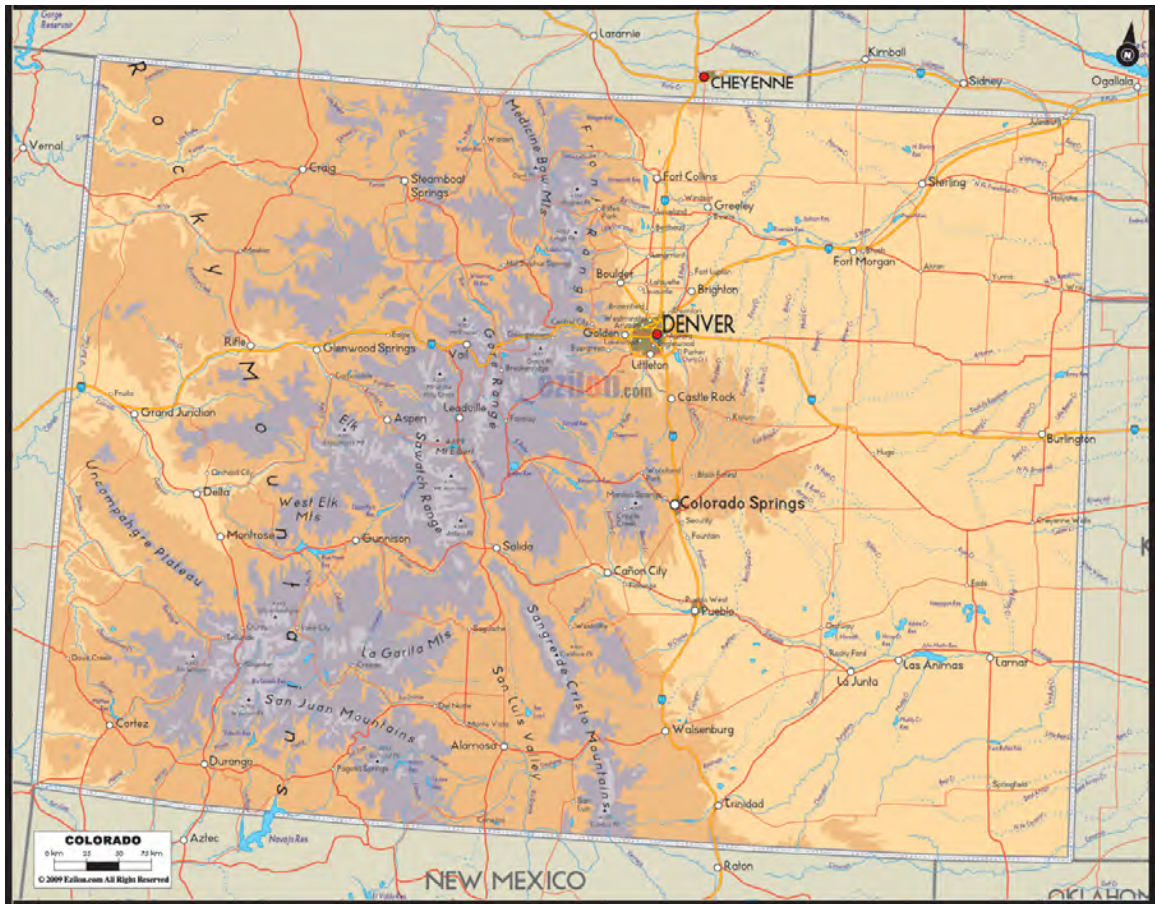
<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Greenwood’s prognostication proved amazingly accurate as Pueblo produced an overwhelming number of Colorado’s early governors, senators, congressmen, and state legislators.

to the west. Moreover, the very name of the territory's most prominent mountain chain, the Front Range, implied an expectation that travelers would approach it from the east to the west, thus the first mountains seen from the plains became the front wall of the Rockies. It was here, at the junction of plain and mountain, that the state's principal cities all emerged, forming a line of urban modernity stretching from Fort Collins, in the north, to the Trinidad, in the south.

What Greenwood and thousands of other travelers in nineteenth century actually experienced was a rarely considered topographic and geographic phenomenon. When most early Anglo adventurers arrived in Colorado, they tended to travel from north to south, along rather than through the Front Range. Less noticed differences north to south shaped the future and fortunes of Colorado Springs and Pueblo. Geographies often describe the Front Range as a straight, solid wall of mountains. Yet the reality is far messier. If the Front Range is Colorado's spine, then the state suffers from scoliosis (Map 1.1). The wall of mountains, in fact, protrudes far eastward at the center of the state, near Colorado Springs, where Pikes Peak seems to float above the plains rather than being firmly anchored to the rest of the mountain chain. It was no wonder that it became the foremost landmark for fortune seekers crossing the plains—"Pikes Peak or bust." Moreover, this upland protrusion continued onto the plains as a high, forested divide between eastern Colorado's principal drainages: the Platte River, to the north, and the Arkansas River, to the south. Thus, while Colorado Springs and Pueblo were longitudinally identical, their physical settings differed considerably. Colorado Springs

was nestled in dramatic foothills covered in green foliage; Pueblo was situated thirty miles from the foothills, among flat, sandy scrubland and low, eroded mesas.<sup>4</sup>



Map 1.1. Physical relief map of Colorado. Ezilon.com.

Perhaps even more influential than the landscape itself in shaping the identities and fates of these two cities was the proliferation of first-person travel narratives and promotional materials, many of which attempted to account for this sudden change in scenery. In the second half of the nineteenth century, especially after the discovery of gold in July 1858, the number of Colorado newspaper correspondents and guidebooks exploded. The truthfulness of correspondents ranged from “modest fancy to derangement,”

<sup>4</sup> Elliott West, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 123–24.

while the guidebooks were “showcases of the suasive arts.”<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, they proved quite popular and, I argue, shaped the terms by which future Anglos experienced Colorado’s landscape, influencing expectations and providing a remarkably durable, standardized descriptive lexicon. Moreover, this rhetoric provided not only a way to encounter and explain the state’s bewildering topography but also a method by which to rank spaces in terms of beauty, respectability, and desirability. Writers appraised and affixed a value to each of the state’s varied landscapes, values that eventually manifested themselves in the ways Anglo settlers used and valued the land and its resources as well as how those settlers negotiated with the region’s long-time inhabitants.

What a difference forty miles makes. Even today, travelers on Interstate 25, the north-south freeway connecting Colorado’s principal Front Range cities from Fort Collins to Trinidad, experience a sudden change in topography and climate near the El Paso-Pueblo county line, a place many locals refer to as the Tortilla Curtain. In a matter of a few miles the rugged, cool lushness of Colorado Springs surrenders to the hot, semi-arid mesas of Pueblo. And with it come a bundle of expectations, perceptions, and biases based on a legacy of encounter from the nineteenth century.

This chapter argues that the origins of Colorado’s internal borderland, the Tortilla Curtain, evolved from these nineteenth-century travel writings. Specifically, Eastern newspaper correspondents and guidebook authors wandering through the territory and, later, state, consistently described the mountainous landscape around Colorado Springs in a way that was markedly different than the desert mesa environs of Pueblo. Moreover, these varied narratives expressed a specific moral and racial formula that lauded the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 125–26.

mountains and fountains of Colorado Springs as a place of healing for the mind and body, perfectly appointed by Providence for this divine task. Pueblo, on the other hand, was a veritable wasteland of filth and depravity, long neglected by its lethargic, darker-skinned inhabitants. Yet, because Pueblo's landscape was uninspired and of no moral value, it was open to unfettered Anglo enterprise and some of the most intense industrialization in the American West. Ultimately, the terms of this discourse established a labor-leisure divide that would become the Tortilla Curtain, bringing fresh-air resorts to Colorado Springs and smoke-belching smelters and a steel mill to Pueblo.

The moral appraisals of Eastern authors stemmed from an attempt to explain and categorize unanticipated differences in the landscape. Often, those authors attempted to define differences in moral terms. "People draw their mental maps by configuring the world as familiar and unfamiliar spaces," writes government and international studies scholar Joel S. Migdal. "They are thus constantly navigating, searching for those 'manners of acting' that can delineate configurations of spaces where they feel that they are, or should be, relatively safe, places that somehow feel familiar and different from the chaotic sense of the totally unfamiliar."<sup>6</sup> Instead of the formal creation and enforcement of borders from the top down, for example from the various negotiations of nation states, or from the bottom-up practices of people on the landscape itself, the evolution of the Tortilla Curtain was more sideways, revealing how non-state agents who were not locals could nonetheless use the privileges of race and class to create a borderland, defining

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<sup>6</sup> Joel S. Migdal, "Mental Maps and Virtual Checkpoints: Struggles to Construct and Maintain State and Social Boundaries," in *Boundaries and Belonging: States and Societies in the Struggle to Shape Identities and Local Practices*, ed. Joel S. Migdal (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10.

who and what belonged on either side of a boundary. In this case, an east-west discourse among elite whites helped create a north-south borderland.

This chapter addresses a significant issue that distinguishes the Tortilla Curtain from more traditional international borderlands. Despite emerging at the same moment and from the same historical circumstances, Pueblo and Colorado Springs became very different cities. Yet cities on either side of an international border tend to be more alike one another than cities further away. As historian Terry G. Jordan and geographers Jon T. Kilpinen and Charles F. Gritzher argue, those similarities in cities occupying borderlands tend to increase as one travels west across North America. Here physical boundaries—mountains and waterways—give way to the straight lines geographers and statesmen laid across the landscape. As a result, “Beyond the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian, international boundaries become more difficult to perceive.”<sup>7</sup> Thus the creation of Colorado’s Tortilla Curtain and the evolution of separate identities for Pueblo and Colorado Springs required a much more complex discourse that defined and influenced expectations, particularly in understanding differences in the landscape between the two cities.

Accounting for those differences was the rhetoric of the moral landscape, which was a product of the national mood at the moment Colorado came to the forefront of the white, American imagination. In the East, transcendentalists praised the ruggedness and sublimity of nature as the essence of Christian divinity while the wildly popular Hudson River School painters captured the same mysticism on their canvases. “The aspect of nature is devout,” wrote Ralph Waldo Emerson. “Like the figure of Jesus, she stands with bended head, and hands folded upon the breast. The happiest man is he who learns from

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<sup>7</sup> Terry G. Jordan, Jon T. Kilpinen, and Charles F. Gritzner, *The Mountain West: Interpreting the Folk Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 3.

nature the lesson of worship.”<sup>8</sup> The Hudson River School’s leading painter, Albert Bierstadt, who captured iconic Colorado landscapes on enormous canvases, observed, “the magnificent beauty of the natural world is a manifestation of the mysterious natural laws that will be forever obscured from us.”

The transcendentalists and Hudson River School painters were themselves channeling a much older idea that not only found divinity in nature but also applied moral values to certain landscape features. In both the Old and New Testaments, the mountain is a sacred site of deliverance and communion with the Almighty. Noah’s Ark comes to rest on Mount Ararat; Moses receives the Commandments on Mount Sinai, and the transfigured Jesus confers with God, Moses, and Elijah on a mountaintop. On the other hand, the desert is a place of despair and evil. The Hebrews wandered for forty years in the desert while Satan tempted Jesus for forty days in the desert.

The rhetoric of the moral landscape meant that Eastern Anglo travelers could assign each of Colorado’s spectacular and widely varied topographic features a particular spiritual value. At the pinnacle of moral superiority was the mountain. As Christian Buys points out, “The heart and soul of Colorado has always resided in the land: majestic mountains, lush alpine parks; rushing streams, rugged mesas dotted with piñon pine.”<sup>9</sup> Evidence of this obsession with altitude is the often-noted phenomenon that city-limit signs in Colorado display elevation rather than population; elevation held strong sway in a rhetoric that equated an elevated altitude with an equally elevated body, mind, and soul. “Health is what Colorado most surely and absolutely offers to its visitors,” wrote

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<sup>8</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, New Edition (Boston: James Munroe & Co., 1849), 59.

<sup>9</sup> Christian J. Buys, *Illustrations of Historic Colorado* (Ouray, Colo.: Western Reflections Publishing Co., 2000), 194.



*Philadelphia Press* correspondent W.W. Nevins in 1872. “On this vast upland plateau, six thousand feet above the level of the sea, on which...rests the Rocky Mountains, we have an atmosphere which itself is health.”<sup>10</sup>

Unsurprisingly, this moralizing of space carried with it specific racial connotations that equated the mountains with white skin and the deserts with red or brown. The celebration of Colorado’s alpine splendor left little space for the more arid and Hispanic reality of the southern part of the state, the flatness of the Great Plains, or the dirty bleakness of coal-fueled, ore-based industries. One of the earliest and most prolific descriptions of Colorado was as the “Switzerland of America,” a phrase that not only Europeanized the former Indian and Mexican territory but also eliminated deserts, labor, steel mills, and brown skin from the imagination. The dry, high plains and deserts of Colorado—what writers often called “the wastes”—stood at the opposite end of the moral spectrum, eventually creating a rift that became the Tortilla Curtain.

As Colorado Springs and Pueblo boomed, writers increasingly differentiated between the two cities and their adjacent landscapes in terms of morality and race. Colorado Springs became a site of God-given magnificence, a town and landscape that was highly moral, affluent, leisurely, and white. It was a place so pure, in fact, that just spending time there could cure disease. Pueblo, on the other hand, was a city to approach with caution. While its citizens—at least its white ones—were lauded as inexhaustibly industrious and ambitious, it was nonetheless different from the rest of the state and therefore inherently suspicious. Here debauchery permeated the streets because,

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<sup>10</sup> W.W. Nevins, *Philadelphia Press*, July 1872. In the Navajo tradition, marking the corners of Dinetha, the traditional Navajo homeland, are four sacred peaks, two of which, incidentally, are in Colorado: Blanca Peak (Tsisnaasjini) and Hesperus Mountain (Dibé Nitsaa).

according to Anglo travel correspondents, the city and its landscape were inhospitable: hot, dry, inferior, and foreign.

This new rhetoric proved quite powerful, even reshaping ancient boundaries. The Arkansas River stood for hundreds of years as a *de facto* border between indigenous peoples and, later, European empires. From 1819 until 1848, it was the international border between the United States and briefly New Spain, then Mexico. For decades, trappers, traders, and explorers carefully followed the river only on one bank or the other; crossing the Arkansas could become an international incident.<sup>11</sup> This geopolitical boundary even influenced the location of the original El Pueblo stockade, which, to remain on American soil, had to forsake the higher ground on the south bank for the muddy floodplain to the north; the decision would bring catastrophe to the city in the twentieth century.

Yet considering the emerging rhetoric of the moral landscape and cultural boundaries, the river was a poor divide; the sandy desert on the south bank was identical to the north. Moreover, as an international border far from any population center and with little policing, the Arkansas Valley represented a kind of lawless gray area in which widely traveled, multinational and multiracial traders and intensely local indigenous peoples and settlers crafted *ad hoc* economies that freely mixed currencies, loyalties, and races.<sup>12</sup> Thus the boundary between the Anglo Rocky Mountain West and Hispanic

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<sup>11</sup> For an excellent description of an Arkansas River border incident on the eve of Mexican independence, see Jacob Fowler, *Journal of Jacob Fowler: Narrating an Adventure from Arkansas Through the Indian Territory, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico to the Sources of the Rio Grande Del Norte, 1821–22*, ed. Elliott Coues (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1898).

<sup>12</sup> Examples of racial mixing were common, accepted, and even encouraged throughout Colorado's Arkansas Valley, but perhaps the most notable examples were at the trading forts

Southwest became not a single physical feature like the Arkansas River but the subtler, blurred line of topographic, climatic, and ultimately, cultural differences.

Because of the power of expectation, the American West of the twentieth century was a world largely created on paper in the nineteenth. Words and maps shaped Western landscapes and dictated settlement patterns, even suggesting those places that were morally superior to others. Geographers Michael Dear and Jennifer Wolch point out, "...social life structures territory...and territory shapes social life."<sup>13</sup> As Patricia Nelson Limerick put it, "Western history is a story structured by the drawing of lines and the marking of borders."<sup>14</sup> And this was not a new phenomenon, extending into the long history of human occupation in the West or of borders more generally. As William Ellery Leonard points out in his 1910 introduction to Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*, "...[I]t was a wilderness only from the white man's point of view. The Indian knew it as an open book; the trails and watercourses, the hills, the boundaries between tribes, all were well known and all had their legends and traditions. An immemorial world of man passed away when the Anglo-Saxon set Europe on the Plains."<sup>15</sup>

Yet these early travel writers and even illustrators worked in generalities, playing fast and loose with Colorado's landscape. In turn, these generalities had the power to

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brothers William and Charles Bent and Ceran St. Vrain established on the river. See Arthur King Peters, *Seven Trails West* (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1996); Joseph Orlando Van Hook, "Settlement and Economic Development of the Arkansas Valley from Pueblo to the Colorado-Kansas Line, 1860-1900" (Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1933).

<sup>13</sup> Jennifer R. Wolch and Michael J. Dear, "How Territory Shapes Social Life," in *The Power of Geography: How Territory Shapes Social Life* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 55.

<sup>15</sup> William Ellery Leonard, "Introduction—Francis Parkman: A Great Writer in the Great West," in *The Oregon Trail of Francis Parkman*, by Francis Parkman (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1910), xviii.

shape expectations of newcomers (that all mining camps were rugged and isolated, that Pueblo was a desert, and that Colorado Springs was an Eden). As Christian J. Buys puts it “Illustrations of Rocky Mountain scenery, bustling mining towns, stagecoaches, wildlife, politicians, resorts, and trains dominated that pictorial literature of the 1870s. Seldom did artists draw foul, dreary smelters. Yet, mining in Colorado depended on these belching behemoths.” In another instance, an illustration most likely drawn in the 1860s of a stagecoach and mining camp in the shadow of dramatic but rather nonspecific precipices originally appeared in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* in 1871 and was identified as a location on the Georgetown Road, in Clear Creek Canyon. Crofutt reprinted the image a decade later and identified it as Telluride—on the opposite end of the state.<sup>1617</sup>

Similarly, these assumptions about geography and culture in Colorado and the West could be both powerfully influential and yet subjective and changeable. For example, as numerous Western historians have pointed out, the inaccurate labeling of the Great Plains as the Great American Desert influenced the area’s sparse settlement for decades. “In part the notion of the Great American Desert is a matter of mere words,” observes historian Wallace Stegner in his classic *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, “a semantic difficulty.” The phrase “Great Desert” first appeared in an 1810 report of Zebulon Pike’s expedition in 1806–07. Pike led his party through the sandhill region, leading him to mistakenly compare the plains to African deserts. A popular 1822 atlas expanded the boundaries of the Great Plains and labeled them “Great American Desert.” The expeditions and settlers that followed Pike continued the tradition of referring to the Great Plains as a desert. But as Stegner points out, much of the mislabeling was the result

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<sup>16</sup> Buys, *Illustrations of Historic Colorado*, 45.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

of competing definitions of the word “desert:” one meaning referred to an unpopulated place while the other was a sandy wasteland. “But what came out of them [the Western expedition and survey reports] is an indication of how an objective report, by the misinterpretation of a single word, can produce popular error.” Yet in a matter of a few years following the Civil War, Western boosters, desperate to sell and settle land on the Great Plains, shifted the prevailing notion of the Great Plains, transforming the region into a veritable Eden. Many did so by pointing out the vast herds of bison and the large population of Indians the Great Plains supported.<sup>18</sup>

At the forefront of boosterism in the West were the railroads, which tended to debunk many of the myths with an air of authority while, nonetheless, perpetuating those myths that helped sell land and encouraged settlement along their routes. Historian Richard White notes that the railroads led a veritable information revolution, supplanting word-of-mouth in favor of “a public and open communication network,” particularly appealing to immigrants because it carried the imprimatur of the railroad itself rather than the hearsay of potential hucksters. Moreover, the companies distributed broadsides in a variety of languages and worked local presses. But railroads and town boosters, in their efforts to sell land, often portrayed an environmental reality that simply did not exist, especially when it came to rainfall. Often boosterism supplanted common sense, siting new towns in volatile floodplains, failing slopes, or inhospitable aridity.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West* (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 215–16; Ian Frazier, *Great Plains* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), 8–9.

<sup>19</sup> Richard White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own:*” *A New History of the American West* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 196; Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 125.

## First Encounters

Perhaps the first published and widely read description of the future Colorado Springs and Pueblo regions comes from Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail: Sketches of Prairie and Rocky-Mountain Life*, first serialized from 1847 to 1849 in *Knickerbocker's Magazine* and published as a book in 1849. Its popularity among historians and Western enthusiasts led to at least six subsequent reprintings, including the vaunted 1910 edition, with contributions by literary scholar William Ellery Leonard and eminent historian Frederick Jackson Turner.



Figure 1.2. Francis Parkman at age twenty. Wikimedia (public domain).

The text is a firsthand account of Parkman's (Figure 1.2) adventure across the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains for two months in the summer of 1846. On August 4, the Harvard-educated historian and botanist left Fort Laramie, Wyoming Territory, with a motley band of companions on a 300-mile journey due south over the high plains to the trading post at Pueblo.

He represented the leading edge of a wave of northeasters—usually wealthy, college graduates—who would inundate the vast landscapes of Colorado's Front Range over the next half century, translating into words their observations, dreams, and biases for hungry readers back East.

In many ways, Parkman pioneered what would become the convention for narrating a first-time encounter with the landscape of the Front Range. The formula

dramatically pitted desolation and terror against sublimity and divine inspiration, creating a moral divide between the plains and mountains, hell and heaven. It required removing as many people as possible from prairie and mountain, despite the landscape's millennia of human occupation, so that the narrator encountered a seemingly pristine environment, with providence as his only companion. The narrative arc reached its apogee at the moment the protagonist found himself in starkly different surroundings as a lofty, snow-capped precipice, usually Pikes Peak, emerged from behind a curtain of thick clouds, providing reassurance and deliverance after weeks of wandering through a demonic terrain.

Thus, as Parkman describes his trek to Pueblo in a chapter tellingly entitled "The Lonely Journey," he depopulates his route and suggests that it is an adventure into a foreign land. He hoped that his party would not meet "a single human being" over the next two weeks, "for should we encounter any, they would in all probability be enemies, in whose eyes our rifles would be our only passports." And indeed, after leaving an encampment at Horse Creek, Parkman and Shaw do not meet a solitary soul. But they do find signs of human occupation, some more recent than others; all become the source of terror. Following the South Platte River, they come upon the unnerving ruins of fur trader Ceran St. Vrain's fort, where "Our horses recoiled in terror from the neglected entrance, where the heavy gates were torn from their hinges and flung down." The group discovered another fort twelve miles upstream, probably Fort Vasquez or Fort Lupton, "standing in melancholy desertion and neglect." Of more concern were the remains of Arapahoe encampments, some of which had only been vacated hours before Parkman arrived.

Between these fleeting signs of human occupation, Parkman paints the environment as inhospitable and even malevolent. Initiating the kind of language that would affect settlement and land policy in the West for the next century, the wanderer describes the landscape as “an arid desert” covered only by “a few tufts of short grass, dried and shriveled in the heat.” Like Dante in his descent to the inner-most ring of hell, Parkman and his party encounter increasingly unnerving natural, or even supernatural phenomena: a dense mist consumes the plains and scatters their horses, and a brimming river and much-welcomed source of respite vanishes inexplicably into a dry, sandy riverbed in a labyrinth of chasms and ravines. “The old cotton-wood trees that grew along the bank, lamentably abused by lightning and tempest, were withering with the drought, and on the dead limbs...half a dozen crows were hoarsely cawing, like birds of evil omen.” But ominous corvids were only one of many bizarre creatures Parkman encountered during his journey. Among the others were “an abundance of strange insects and reptiles.” Parkman describes biblical numbers of crickets, grasshoppers “of the most extravagant dimensions,” lizards, and most especially, snakes. The group killed four or five large rattlesnakes a day, “as they lay coiled and rattling on the hot sand.”<sup>20</sup>

Yet the desolation and hellish landscape combined to provide an even more dramatic encounter with the mountains. As if to mark the profundity of the moment, Parkman does something he neglects to do in his narrative since leaving Fort Laramie; he notes the date, August 16, 1846. On that day, as the travelers began climbing the high divide between the Platte and Arkansas river watersheds, they encounter an utterly new landscape. “The scenery was altogether changed,” Parkman observes. “In place of the

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<sup>20</sup> Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1910), 266–69.



burning plains, we passed through rough and savage glens, and among hills crowned with a dreary growth of pines.” That night, the travelers endured an apocalyptic scene: “The sun went down among volumes of jet-black cloud, edged with a bloody red.” Yet with the morning came deliverance. “[A]ll was fair again,” Parkman writes, “and Pike’s Peak, white with snow, was towering above the wilderness afar off.”<sup>21</sup> Near what would become Colorado Springs, the party braved yet another cloudburst, only again to find their relief with the appearance of the mountains. At the same time, Parkman depicted two elements of the environment that the people of Colorado Springs would celebrate throughout the city’s history, sunshine and blue skies:

The clouds opened at the point where they first had gathered, and the whole sublime congregation of mountains was bathed at once in warm sunshine. They seemed more like some vision of Eastern Romance than like a reality of that wilderness; all were melted together into a soft delicious blue, as voluptuous as the sky of Naples or the transparent sea that washes the sunny cliffs of Capri.<sup>22</sup>

Despite these moments of exhilarating beauty, the chapter ends with a scene of tranquil, pastoral simplicity rather than soaring, divine inspiration: “the Arkansas ran along the valley below, among woods and groves, and closely nestled in the midst of wide corn-fields and green meadows, where cattle were grazing, rose the low mud walls of the Pueblo.”<sup>23</sup>

Parkman’s first glimpse of Pueblo is subtle but profound; this is a landscape starkly different from the rest of his journey because it is tamed and under cultivation. The signs of human occupation are not ghostly ruins or the scattered ashes of campfires, but the age-old hallmarks of civilization: agriculture and architecture. Moreover,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 274–75.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 275.

Parkman separates his journey from its destination by a chapter break, clearly delimiting his experiences in Eden, complete with a battle between good and evil, from a veritable Babel, with competing languages, races, and religions. The landscape of Pueblo was everything the landscape of the journey was not; it was peopled, even urban. Here were gathered men and women; Indians, Mexicans, Spaniards, Frenchmen, and Americans; Catholics, Protestants, Mormons, and heathens. Moreover, Parkman initiates a trope about Pueblo that many Eastern writers would continue into the twentieth century: the town was hot, dirty, and foreign. After all, long before Colorado was a territory, the old trading post sometimes went by the name “Pueblo Colorado” (without the comma), literally meaning town of dirt-red color:<sup>24</sup>

We approached the gate of the Pueblo. It was a wretched species of fort, of most primitive construction, being nothing more than a large square enclosure, surrounded by a wall of mud, miserably cracked and dilapidated. The slender pickets that surmounted it were half broken down, and the gate dangled on its wooden hinges so loosely that to open or shut it seemed likely to fling it down altogether. Two or three squalid Mexicans, with their broad hats, and their vile faces overgrown with hair, were lounging about the bank of the river in front of it.<sup>25</sup>

Tellingly William Ellery Leonard describes this often-quoted Pueblo passage as “...the dirty bourgeois at the gates of the trading post.”<sup>26</sup>

Parkman’s treatment of Mexicans is particularly interesting, given the author’s relatively progressive and sympathetic (compared to others at the same time) view of Indians, an aspect of the memoir many historians, Turner included, lauded. Yet Parkman’s work is imbued with manifest destiny. Considering all of Parkman’s historical

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<sup>24</sup> Janet Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn: The Upper Arkansas, 1832–56* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1978), 52.

<sup>25</sup> Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 1910, 276.

<sup>26</sup> Leonard, “Introduction—Francis Parkman,” xvii; Lecompte, *Pueblo, Hardscrabble, Greenhorn*, 46.

works, Leonard writes in his introduction to the 1910 edition, “The issues fought for have an epic simplicity and grandeur of outline.... The hero is the Anglo-Saxon Genius [sic] warring by destiny for its new home,...whence the American people and the lofty towers of these states.”<sup>27</sup>

While elsewhere Parkman uses the language of the noble savage and laments the seemingly inevitable loss of their culture, his use of the adjectives “squalid” and “vile” as well as the verb “lounging” to describe Pueblo’s Mexicans is quite telling. While both adjectives suggest filth and dirt, they connote through other meanings moral depravity. Additionally, “lounging” implies laziness and indolence, key descriptors of a long-standing stereotype that denigrated Mexicans while at the same time casting Anglos as indefatigably industrious and therefore more worthy of the land and resources the Mexican supposedly squandered. Yet Parkman goes further, connecting filth, depravity, and idleness to the landscape itself. He notes that at Pueblo “a few Mexicans, as mean and miserable as the place itself, were lazily sauntering about.” Parkman is quite explicit: “The human race in this part of the world is separated into three divisions, arranged in the order of their merits: white men, Indians, and Mexicans; to the latter of whom the honorable title of ‘whites’ is by no means conceded.”<sup>28</sup>

Indeed the problem with Pueblo for Parkman was not that it was hot, dry, and dirty but that the wrong kinds of people occupied the outpost, particularly Mexicans and Mormons, the latter of whom Parkman described as “a very dangerous body of men.” These people, in turn, biased his view of the landscape. Yet Parkman found a moment of

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<sup>27</sup> Leonard, “Introduction—Francis Parkman,” xv; Richard White, “Race Relations in the American West,” *American Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1986): 399.

<sup>28</sup> Parkman, *The Oregon Trail*, 1910, 279.

sublime peace and beauty on his departure from Pueblo just as he had done upon his arrival: “Passing out of the gate, we could look down the little valley of the Arkansas; a beautiful scene, and doubly so to our eyes, so long accustomed to deserts and mountains.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Adobe, Sagebrush, and American Progress**

After Parkman, descriptions of the Pikes Peak region first reached Easterners through newspaper correspondents. Among the earliest was a member of a railroad surveying party who identified himself solely as “Delta.” In July 1867, the group left Fort Lyon to explore Sangre de Cristo and “Moscow” (Mosca) passes, southwest of Pueblo. It is notable that apart from the geologist and botanist, the leaders of the expedition were all Easterners from Baltimore, Philadelphia, and other cities in eastern Pennsylvania. Significantly, this correspondent was the first to mention Pueblo (as a place in the Colorado Territory) in the *New York Times* and initially notes the settlement’s relationship to coal deposits, a harbinger of the city’s industrial future. Like Parkman, Delta reserved his most dramatic language for the stark contrast between plain and mountain, boredom and adventure: “Now we were all impatient for the change from the monotonous and barren plain, with its dull routine, to the wild grandeur of the Rocky Mountains, with its dense forests, its cool, bubbling springs, its precipices and ravines, its

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<sup>29</sup> Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail of Francis Parkman* (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1910), 278.

snow-covered peaks, its constantly varying landscape, where many a thrilling adventure might befall us.”<sup>30</sup>

Beyond differences in the landscape, many writers noted differences in architecture. One of the more interesting aspects of the Delta chronicle is the way in which the author connects space to race, pioneering conventions that would permeate varied descriptions of Pueblo as well as the Arkansas and San Luis valleys in relationship to the rest of Colorado through the twentieth century. The correspondent visited the Arkansas valley ranch of a Mr. Branoramau, who employed only white ranch hands “contrary to the usual custom of the country, thinking it much the better plan to keep the Mexicans off his place.” The nearby ranch of a Mr. Doyle was particularly impressive because it was “a neat frame cottage of modern style.” The wood-frame dwelling stood out as remarkable because of the proliferation of “old Mexican style and place of building,” which consisted of a “large square flat dirt-roofed adobe with parlor, bedrooms, kitchen, pantry, cellar, stables, barns, storehouses, all on the ground floor.”<sup>31</sup>

“Adobe” became a loaded term in these descriptions as it evolved in the nineteenth century into a shorthand to Anglo readers for the dirty, foreign, inferior, archaic, languid, and even depraved. Historian William Deverell notes that “Adobe...stood for the past, a dark-skinned past at that, even a different epoch,” while “Brick meant progress. Brick stood for the Anglo future.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, historian Chris Wilson points out that because New Mexican adobe appeared to Anglos to be “in a

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<sup>30</sup> Delta, “Across the Plains: Surveying Operations of the Second Division—The Sangre De Cristo and Moscow Passes—Measurement in the Territories—The Ranches,” *New York Times*, September 15, 1867, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 133, 135.

perpetual state of decay,” it represented, like the desert landscape itself, moral decay, standing as an architecture of “loose women, gambling, cowardice, a lack of proper hygiene, and immoral clergy.”<sup>33</sup> And while many historians, architects, and anthropologists have pointed out the irony that adobe was, in fact, environmentally and structurally superior to traditional Anglo building materials and methods in the hot, dry, treeless desert, they miss the point. One reason wood and brick were popular among Anglos in the Southwest, even though they were incompatible with desert construction, was precisely because they required significant industrial and transportation innovations. Brick and wood framing expressed Anglo cultural superiority, not just an aesthetic vogue.

So persistent was this perception of adobe that it required writers, at the insistence of Pueblo boosters, to reassure readers that the building material and its Mexican roots had been thoroughly scrubbed away. In 1871, as the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad approached the town from Colorado Springs, Pueblo entered a construction boom, gaining 107 new buildings. Yet of those buildings, only twenty were brick and thirty-three were wood-frame; adobe still dominated at fifty-one structures.<sup>34</sup> The issue required finessing. In his four-volume, *History of the State of Colorado*, published in 1889, Frank Hall admits that while adobe construction had long dominated in Pueblo, “the mud houses disappeared and were replaced by substantial residences and business houses of brick and stone.” But he had to go a step further: “While it (Pueblo) had borne some likeness to...Santa Fé..., it now took the nature of an American town which had the foundation of modern ideas and taste, and would henceforth be identified with the United

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<sup>33</sup> Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 53.

<sup>34</sup> Frank Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Blakely Printing Co., 1889), 511.

States instead of Mexico in thought, feeling and action.” This admission is even more remarkable given that Pueblo was built on the north bank of the Arkansas River and, thus, had always existed in the sovereign territory of the United States. Regardless of this boast, Hall still had to concede, like nearly every newspaper correspondent and guidebook author, that Pueblo’s hotels were dismal and the town still lacked trees and parks. Moreover, his prediction that Pueblo would not be identified with Mexico would prove a challenge well into the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

For years, newspaper correspondents continued to link “adobe” and “Mexican” with southern Colorado, establishing Pueblo as the gateway to a different world. Another unnamed *New York Times* correspondent remarked...

From Pueblo, southward, we begin to see less of the American and more of the Mexican element. The houses are of adobe; the fields, though rich, poorly tilled, as we pass immense herds of the inferior Mexican sheep.... [T]he towns disappear, and give place to Spanish classes. The ranchmen abjure modern implements, plough with wooden cross-bars, thrash with the flail, and go to market with burros.... The Mexican is not much on “beef and the newspaper,” but “bock-sheesh” and the old Spanish legends are his chief desire.<sup>36</sup>

Grace Greenwood, on the other hand, described an entirely different world forty miles to the north, noting the popularity of Colorado Springs among wealthy British and Northeastern tourists. Following the lead of Fitz Hugh Ludlow, she also was among the first to connect the fledgling town to the wealthy health resorts at Longbranch and Saratoga. Greenwood later proclaimed to the *Times*’s readers that her stay in the Colorado Springs area had not only tempered the symptoms of “nervous asthma and

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 1:508.

<sup>36</sup> “South-Western Colorado,” *New York Times*, October 25, 1873, 2. “Bock-sheesh appears to refer to the Persian word “baksheesh,” alluding to charitable giving or bribery. Thus the comments suggests the general poverty, lawlessness, and ignorance of Mexican settlers in southern Colorado.

acute bronchitis” that struck her every late summer and autumn for the past two decades, but also had miraculously cured her. “For me, at least, lovely Manitou, gay and grand, bright and shadowy, was a perfect asylum, a sanctuary, a city of refuge from sickness and suffering....”<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, Greenwood, like so many before and after her, was convinced that Colorado’s climate could cure tuberculosis. She even provided consumptives with a list of possible cities in which to relocate. Interestingly, she included Pueblo and endorsed it for those tuberculars who desired a warmer climate and, especially, for businessmen, encouraging the city’s reputation as a center of commerce. At the same time, Greenwood pressed her naturalist imagery into a description of Pueblo’s capitalist-driven hubbub, likening enterprise to the environment. “Many go to Pueblo, which is a good point, especially interesting for men who have led an active business life, and like to watch the rush and rapids of enterprise and prosperity. It is a wonderfully stirring place, and is making incredible progress—in particular, South Pueblo, which seems destined to be a great business centre....”<sup>38</sup>

Greenwood also continues the moralization of the landscape. While she found the environment and terrain of the Manitou area divinely appointed, peppering her narratives with scripture, her reaction to one of the Pueblo region’s preeminent geological wonders, Royal Gorge, was exactly the opposite response. Though impressed, she describes the canyon as “awful,” “gloomy,” “so strange and lonely and savage and out of the world.” Instead of scripture or Romantic poetry, she quotes Dante’s *Inferno*: “There is a place within the depths of hell....” She revisited the canyon in October and again evoked Dante.

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<sup>37</sup> Grace Greenwood, “Notes of Travel,” *New York Times*, September 2, 1873, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Grace Greenwood, “Notes of Travel,” *New York Times*, November 15, 1873, 3.



She insisted that the Royal Gorge was a different kind of nature—more hostile and mysterious—than at Manitou, and was a place pristine and devoid of people, despite millennia of human occupation:

This is a mighty gash in the dark rocks—a black, winding chasm, with no foliage on the sides of the sheer precipices, no faithful pines, no comforting vines and ferns—no slightest fringe of foliage along the mad, plunging river; nothing to relieve the fearsomeness of the sharp rocky rim above the jagged edge of horror; nothing to lighten the appalling steep and sunless deeps below. It is the lair of the primeval savagery of nature—the sanctuary of eternal solitude.<sup>39</sup>

Other correspondents largely concurred with Greenwood. On August 3, 1874, an unnamed *New York Times* correspondent arrived in Colorado to take part in the Wheeler expedition. On the way to Pueblo from Denver, he passed through Colorado Springs. “It has good hotels, two newspapers, fine residences, is plentifully irrigated, and the view of Pike’s Peak,...and the nearer mountains, is plentifully fine, especially toward night, when there is always a storm around them.” The correspondent even visited Greenwood at Manitou Springs and toured “the indescribable” Garden of the Gods and “grand” Ute Pass. The only downside: “not much liquor is to be had....” Pueblo, on the other hand, stood out not because of any natural features but because it was the railroad’s terminus “...and not located in so delightful a country.” Nonetheless, “Pueblo is trying worthily to thrive.”<sup>40</sup>

While Greenwood’s sentimental narratives may have appealed to a more elite crowd, it was guidebook authors who enticed migrants and tourists alike into the West and reinforced the Tortilla Curtain. Foremost among them was the prodigious George A. Crofutt. To say Crofutt was an acolyte of manifest destiny and the gospel of American

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<sup>39</sup> Grace Greenwood, “Colorado Notes,” *New York Times*, October 24, 1874, 7.

<sup>40</sup> “Far West Explorations,” *New York Times*, August 10, 1874, 5.

progress would be a gross understatement; he was surely a high-ranking member of its priesthood. It was, after all, Crofutt who commissioned John Gast to paint *American Progress* in 1872 (Figure 1.3). This iconic, allegorical image depicts “American destiny” as a very pale, blonde-haired woman in an impossibly flowing white gown. As she floats presumably westward, helpfully stringing telegraph wire behind her, white settlers arrive in Conestoga wagons, stagecoaches, and finally railroad trains, pushing Indians, bison, and a bear off the left side of the canvas. Crofutt reprinted an engraving of the painting in all of his numerous western guidebooks printed after 1872, promoting the image as the *de facto* symbol of Anglo progress in the American West.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Martha A. Sandweiss, “My Favorite Image: John Gast, American Progress, 1872,” *Picturing U.S. History*, accessed April 1, 2014, [http://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/item.php?item\\_id=180](http://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/item.php?item_id=180).



Figure 1.3. "American Progress" by John Gast, 1872. Wikimedia (public domain).

*Croft's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado*, published in 1881, was half working-class migrant handbook and half middle-class tourist guide. For the migrant, Croft offered a handy glossary of mining terms and a list of current wages, ranging from wood choppers (\$1 a day) to stonecutters (\$4 a day). He even included fatherly advice, insisting that anyone could find work in Colorado so long as he exhibited "honesty, sobriety, and reliability." But for those not so predisposed, "stay away from Colorado, and let your friends, if you have any, support you in idleness." And above all else, Croft insisted—perhaps more to titillate the tourist than to warn the migrant—that everyone should stay away from the gambling dens, barrooms, and brothels, "or you're lost; may be with your 'boots on.'" For the tourist, Croft offered impressively detailed tours by various

railroad and postal road routes, descriptions of nearly every town and city in the state, and several feature articles touching on subjects ranging from the extraordinarily deep caverns in Leadville to the enigmatic ruins at Mesa Verde. For both groups was the handy glossary of “Spanish-Mexican and Indian Names” used in the guidebook.<sup>42</sup>

Crofutt’s tours are particularly interesting because they work explicitly to shape the expectations of first-time travelers while subtly reinforcing the Tortilla Curtain. Because of its detail, Tour Number Six, “The Denver & Rio Grande Railway, via Pueblo, to Leadville, etc.” is one of the first narratives to map with some precision the area that would become the Tortilla Curtain. As the *Leadville Express* traveled southward from Denver, Pikes Peak emerged in front of the locomotive. By the time the express reached Divide, the full wonder of the Rampart Range came into view. The train passed frigid Palmer Lake and the otherworldly, sombrero-shaped pillars at Monument. Crofutt offered the usual high praise for Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs, places that would bring “health and vigor to the system.” At Fountain, four miles south of Colorado Springs, Crofutt first mentioned “sage brush land.” Just north of Little Buttes, sand bluffs flanked the track. Thereafter the landscape became notably more barren: “The country for the next twenty miles is not much improved, as it cannot be depended upon for crops without irrigation, and as water is not to be had, unless wells are dug and wind mills used for elevating the water, it will doubtless remain as it is—a stock range.” From there the list of station names said much about the landscape: Piñon, Cactus, North Pueblo. As a parting

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<sup>42</sup> George A. Crofutt, *Crofutt’s Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado*, vol. 1 (Omaha: Overland Publishing Co., 1881), 27–28.

shot, Crofutt notds, rather dismally, “all are signal stations, where passenger trains seldom stop.”<sup>43</sup>

And when Crofutt traveled more deeply into the terrain south of Pueblo his stance on race in relation to manifest destiny and American progress became apparent. Tour Number Seven took the Denver & Rio Grande south from Pueblo to Walsenburg and from there west to Alamosa, in the San Luis Valley. The country between Walsenburg and the summit at La Veta Pass was lost in time, a pocket untouched by American “progress” and superiority:

In passing along up the creek, it will be noticed that nearly all the settlers are Mexicans or Spanish, and they observe all the old customs of Spanish countries, particularly in their cultivation of the soil. They ignore the usual implements of husbandry to a great extent. They tickle the ground with a wooden plow; cut their grain with hand knives; thresh it out with goats, clean in the wind by dropping it to the ground from an elevated position when the wind is blowing. Then when the grain is gathered and cleaned it is pounded to a powder between large flat stones. Goats and sheep are their stock in trade. Their houses are of adobe, or, at best, logs, and the number of children is only equaled by the number of dogs....<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 1:55–56.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 1:62.

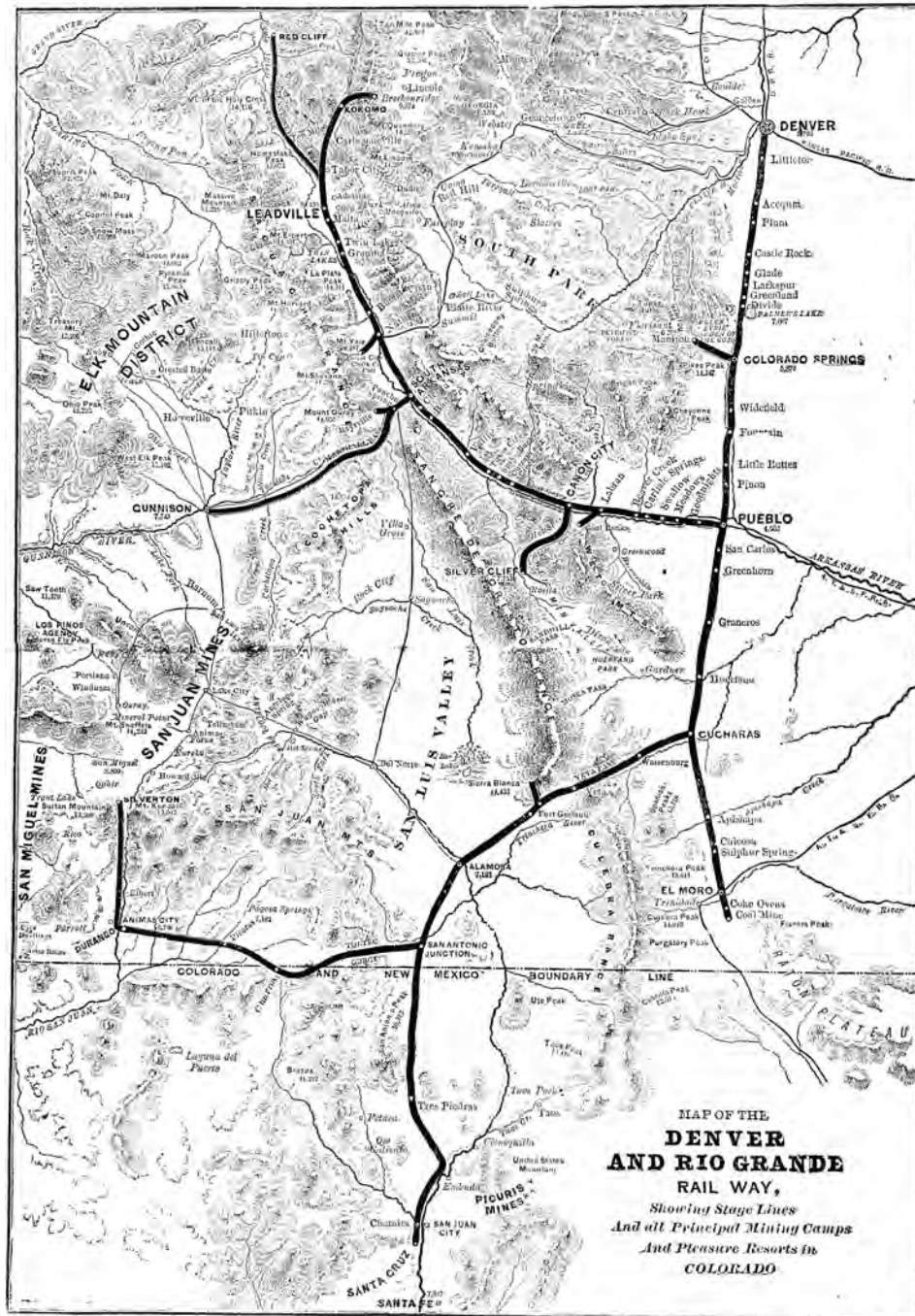


Figure 1.4. Route of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. *Croftutt's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado*, 1881.

While Croftutt was unusually straightforward in his Pueblo narrative, neither praising nor demeaning the city, he shared Greenwood's darker language when describing nearby natural features, particularly Royal Gorge. Indeed, Croftutt went a step further than Greenwood, describing a landscape not just of darkness and terror but also of

outright violence. Here the mountains were “suddenly slashed from summit to base, as though by some jagged instrument, leaving a fearful chasm, narrow, deep and gloomy.” Yet despite the horrific description this was one of the few landscapes in the guidebook Crofutt insisted travelers must visit. “You see and *feel* what no tongue can express or pen can portray,” the author exclaimed. “*Come yourself!*”<sup>45</sup>

In *Crofutt’s Guide*, many of the terms Greenwood and others had pioneered in prior years became outright conventions. Particularly telling was his use of the terms “adobe” and “sagebrush.” Excepting the ruins of Fort Lupton, on the South Platte River northeast of Denver, every mention of adobe comes from a location south of what would become the Tortilla Curtain. Moreover, all but two uses are adjacent to the adjectives “Mexican” or “Spanish,” and most are often near some disparaging quip about hordes of dogs, farm animals, and children mingling in streets, equating the settlers with their livestock. For example, Crofutt’s description of La Jara, in Conejos County, concluded, “Agriculturists and stock raisers possess the country, the majority of whom are Spanish-Mexicans, and reside in Adobe one story houses, surrounded with sheep, goats, dogs and babies about equally divided.” As well, references to adobe often coincided with some sense of the past or lack of progress. Similarly, Crofutt’s “sage brush” implies a landscape that would be barren without irrigation, which was to say without the intervention of Anglo industry and technology. Indeed, “irrigation” or “water” followed closely every instance of “sage brush,” as does “waste.” And in his glossary, Crofutt explained that “La Junta,” a settlement east of Pueblo on the Arkansas River, translated as “Shrubbery, brush,” when in fact it meant “the junction,” a reference to the two

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 1:57. Emphasis original.

sections of the Santa Fe Trail that diverged there. Nonetheless, the author's description of the town again noted that without irrigation, the area could not be productive.<sup>46</sup>

### **The Rhetorical Landscape of General Palmer**



Figure 1.5. General William Jackson Palmer, founder of Colorado Springs and South Pueblo. Wikimedia (public domain).

Certainly no figure loomed as largely in the early history of Colorado Springs and Pueblo as General William Jackson Palmer (Figure 1.5). While Palmer never widely published his own take on the Colorado landscape, his personal correspondence and the fact that so many Eastern correspondents felt obligated to visit the industrial mogul at his Colorado Springs estate suggest that his influence was widespread, reinforcing the existing rhetoric and creating some contradictions.

Pueblo and Colorado City, the pioneering mining town Colorado Springs later replaced, remained volatile villages, subject to fickle

mining fortunes and federal monetary policies, until Palmer arrived in Colorado Territory in 1867. The high plains and soaring Front Range immediately entranced the Pennsylvania Quaker, decorated Union Army veteran, and former personal secretary to railroad magnate J. Edgar Thomson; his love affair with Colorado, particularly the area around Pike's Peak, lasted a lifetime and inspired a vision of a new, industrial utopia, "to

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1:114.



build among the mountains an ordered and prosperous commonwealth,” noted Palmer’s preeminent biographer John Fisher.<sup>47</sup> “Could one live in constant view of these grand mountains without being elevated by them to a lofty plane of thought and purpose?” Palmer asked his fiancée Mary Lincoln “Queen” Mellen, in 1870. “[The Front Range was] like the shore of a glorious New Land, a newer and grander and happier Columbia than that which greeted the great sailor on the beach of Santa Domingo.”<sup>48</sup>

Palmer climbed to that “loftier plane of thought and purpose” while riding the Kansas Pacific Railroad to Salina, Kansas, in July 1870. Two subsequent letters to Queen became his manifesto:

I had a dream last evening while sitting in the gloaming at the car window....I thought how fine it would be to have a little railroad a few hundred miles in length, all under one’s own control with one’s friends, to have no jealousies and contests and differing policies, but to be able to carry out unimpeded and harmoniously one’s views in regard to what ought and ought not to be done. In this ideal railroad all my friends should be interested, the most fitting men should be chosen for the different positions, and all would work heartedly and unitedly towards the common end....

It would be quite a little family, and everybody should be looked after to see that there was no distress among the workmen and their families—and schools should be put up for them, and bath-houses, and there should be libraries and lectures, and there would never be any strikes or hard feelings among the laborers toward the capitalists, for they would all be capitalists themselves in a small way, and be paid enough to enable them to save something, and those savings they should be furnished with opportunities of investing in and along the Road, so that all their interests should be the same as their employers’.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> John S. Fisher, *A Builder of the West: The Life of General William Jackson Palmer* (Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1939), 243.

<sup>48</sup> William Jackson Palmer to Queen Mellen, January 30, 1870, folder 706, box 9, Colorado Historical Society; Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America’s Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), chap. 1; Fisher, *A Builder of the West*, 161–63; Jeffrey DeHerrera, Adam Thomas, and Cheria Yost, *Industrial Utopia: The History and Architecture of South Pueblo* (Denver: Historitecture, 2011), 13–14.

<sup>49</sup> Fisher, *A Builder of the West*, 177–78.

Palmer formulated a plan of corporate paternalism on a truly spectacular scale, integrated vertically and horizontally. The backbone of his vision was a new railroad, boldly transgressing the east-west trend of the country's fledgling transcontinental railroads by building southward to connect Denver to Mexico City. Tellingly, Palmer initially referred to the railroad as the "Imperial Pacific."<sup>50</sup> While Denver would serve as the corporate headquarters, Pueblo would become its heart, hosting the new Denver & Rio Grande Railroad's extensive shops and yards. Moreover, in Pueblo Palmer planned a steel mill, the first of its kind west of the Mississippi River. To this scheme he added vast coalfields and iron ore deposits in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico.

But it was in remaking Pueblo and Colorado City to fit his utopian vision that Palmer concentrated much of his efforts. In 1872 he hired civil engineer Edwin Nettleton and pioneering Scottish landscape architect John Blair to imprint the industrialist's vision on the landscape.<sup>51</sup> On the northern edge of the old Mexican Nolan land grant, on the south bank of the Arkansas River across from Pueblo, the pair platted the sprawling new city of South Pueblo. On the floodplain beneath towering bluffs, Nettleton and Blair planned a commercial district, which the D&RG depot would anchor. On the high plain to the south would be a neighborhood of square blocks set distinctively at a forty-five degree angle from the rest of the city—a feature that still disorients visitors and residents alike. Most surprisingly, on the mesa tops just south of the commercial district, Blair laid out Corona Park, a neighborhood of graceful curvilinear streets and numerous pocket

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>51</sup> Blair actually referred to himself as a "landscape gardener."

parks based on Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux's 1869 plan for Riverside, Illinois, only three years South Pueblo's senior.<sup>52</sup>

But Nettleton and Blair's plat of South Pueblo paled in comparison with the staggering scope of their plans for jewel in Palmer's crown: an 800-acre private estate, to be called Glen Eyrie, and the fantastic new city it would overlook: Colorado Springs. Palmer had fallen in love with the place the moment he laid his eyes upon it, writing a prolonged, exuberant, haughty letter to Queen Mellen on July 28, 1869. He called the place an "Eden" and found it perfect in every respect for the principal of his "colonies."<sup>53</sup>

Mr. Carr and I concluded to buy, if it could be had, at the Government price—several thousand acres of it. And I have been dreaming ever since of how I would treat my portion of it (after you had selected it); how the Castle should be on one of the bold pine-topped hills near the mountain flight, and the farmhouses in the smooth rounded Valley; how there should be fountains and lakes, and lovely drives and horse-back trails through groves—all planned and planted by ourselves—so that "Dunkald" would grow up under our own eyes, the child of our fancy and creation. How much better this would be than to find it made to our hand!<sup>54</sup>

Colorado Springs and Glen Eyrie became Palmer's obsession—his religion, and given his strained marriage to Queen and her dislike of the West, his mistress as well.

General Palmer was also among the first Easterners to abbreviate the space between Pueblo and Mexico in a way that brought the international border northward. In correspondence, he often described in detail nearly every mile of his projected railroad

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<sup>52</sup> Edwin Nettleton and John Blair, "Map of South Pueblo," December 13, 1872, Book 2B, p. 4–5, Pueblo County Clerk and Recorder; H. Lee Scamehorn, *Pioneer Steelmaker in the West: The Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, 1872–1903* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 1976), 13; Philip Pregill and Nancy Volkman, *Landscapes in History: Design and Planning in the Western Tradition* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993), 479–83; DeHerrera, Thomas, and Yost, *Industrial Utopia*, 37–39, 41.

<sup>53</sup> Fisher, *A Builder of the West*, 182.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 164–65.

from Denver to Pueblo, then spoke in general of its construction from there to Mexico City. For instance, in a letter to Queen on August 7, 1869, Palmer predicted that “the line of a Railroad ...in a few years must be built from Denver Southward to the Arkansas, and so on, by the San Luis Park to Mexico.”<sup>55</sup> That “and so on” condensed 600 miles into three small words.

### **Contradictions**

Despite a consensus among the newspapers and guidebooks, descriptions of Colorado Springs and Pueblo were hardly monolithic, particularly in light of General Palmer’s efforts. Grace Greenwood herself grieved that as her beloved Manitou Springs developed, it had taken on “an unlovely, commonplace aspect.... [T]he buildings are in wretched taste, and scattered about in the haphazard, higgledy-piggledy style of the first erections in the most unimportant Western towns.”<sup>56</sup> In November 1876, “Weco,” a correspondent for the *Baltimore Sun*, described the trip on the new Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway line from Pueblo to La Junta. While the writer says little about the town itself, he or she declares the air in Pueblo “pure and bracing” and the climate “exceedingly healthy.”<sup>57</sup> The observation is a curious one since, by that point, the city hosted at least one large ore smelter, an iron rolling mill, and several foundries, not to mention the dozens of steam locomotives in the service of the Denver & Rio Grande and Santa Fe railroads—all belching sulfurous coal smoke.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>56</sup> Grace Greenwood, “Summering in Colorado,” *New York Times*, August 30, 1877, 1.

<sup>57</sup> Weco, “Letter from a Traveler—No. 3,” *Baltimore Sun*, December 16, 1876.

And two settlements, Colorado City and South Pueblo, tended to convolute and even contradict the evolving narratives. Palmer's new settlement of South Pueblo proved particularly problematic for the emerging, moralized landscape rhetoric. It was a place where the narrative of Anglo progress through Manifest Destiny coexisted uncomfortably on a landscape of immorality and hostility. But it was the General's vision. Thus correspondents and guidebooks heaped praise on South Pueblo, often immediately after disparaging old Pueblo, immediately to the north. Even Greenwood got caught in this conundrum. In the same article, she lamented that "'Tis a pity that the best of the old town cannot be taken up from its deep bed of adobe dust and moved over to the grand *mesa* of South Pueblo." Yet just across the river, South Pueblo was "...a wonderful, incomparable site for a city...remarkably healthful and wonderfully beautiful...."<sup>58</sup> Crofutt did the same. While the guide's description of Pueblo was far kinder than Greenwood's, it concluded "Pueblo is the centre for a vast extent of agricultural, stock-raising, and mining country, and for its size, does an immense business, but sadly needs a *good* hotel."<sup>59</sup> Yet, while Pueblo was the county seat as well as the commercial capital of southern Colorado, the upstart South Pueblo received more than triple the coverage in *Crofutt's Guide*. And the lengthy description did not include a single disparaging line.

Instead, Crofutt praised the residential section of the city for "commanding a fine view of

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<sup>58</sup> Greenwood, "Colorado Notes," October 24, 1874, 7. Greenwood also neglects to mention the smelters and ironworks in Pueblo and South Pueblo. Yet her opinion of them can be gleaned from a trip she made to Blackhawk, which had a similar number of ore refineries as Pueblo. "The sulfurous air of Blackhawk's smelting works is peculiarly horrible to me. It brings back certain dreadful orthodox discourses heard in my childhood; it suggests all the torments of the asthma and is fixing." Thus, while Colorado Springs provided an air of healing, the air in Pueblo was presumably filled with torment and sickness. Yet she fails to mention this point. See Grace Greenwood, "Colorado Notes," *New York Times*, October 20, 1874, 5.

<sup>59</sup> Crofutt, *Crofutt's Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado*, 1:134. Emphasis original.

Pueblo and surrounding country for many miles.” And unlike seemingly every other town the guide describes in southern Colorado, South Pueblo’s streets were “lined with rows of planted trees, giving the city a very cool and beautiful appearance.”<sup>60</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Greenwood, Crofutt, and other writers may not have been fully unbiased in their opinions of South Pueblo, especially considering the power Palmer and his Denver & Rio Grande Railroad held in Colorado in the 1870s and 1880s. As she described South Pueblo, Greenwood’s language became uncharacteristically stilted and inelegant; her text reads more like a sales pitch to eastern readers, so much so that she even listed the prices of building lots and the address to contact the Colorado Improvement Company’s treasurer. Not surprisingly, Greenwood was a close friend of Palmer; a season spent at Glen Eyrie convinced her to settle permanently in Manitou Springs.<sup>61</sup> And numerous, full-page advertisements for the D&RG in *Crofutt’s Guide* certainly suggest that the author may have wanted to shine the best possible light on his benefactor. In fact, he did, calling the D&RG “audacious” and its directors “progressive, far-reaching, and sagacious.... They *have* won it....”<sup>62</sup>

Palmer’s influence, standardized through Eastern writers, also had the ability to make incompatible landscapes disappear in the Colorado Springs area. Among the most curious consistencies of these narratives is their almost complete omission of Colorado City, a mining and smelting boomtown created in the wake of the 1858 gold rush. The settlement, immediately west of and adjacent to what would become Colorado Springs, was hardly inconsequential, rising as an important center for ore processing and, for a

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 1:144.

<sup>61</sup> Greenwood, “Notes of Travel,” September 2, 1873, 5.

<sup>62</sup> Crofutt, *Crofutt’s Grip-Sack Guide of Colorado*, 1:55.

single legislative season, serving as the capital of the Colorado Territory. Granted, by the time Palmer arrived in 1869 the town was only a shadow of its former self, but it remained the El Paso County seat...until Palmer forcefully relocated the county government to his own, rival town. Moreover, Colorado City was the site of stunning environmental degradation. Ore processing had killed plant and animal life, polluted streams, and left mountains of toxic mine tailings. Yet the place found few mentions in the soaring prose of newspaper correspondents; it was simply too incompatible with the divine splendor of Pikes Peak, the Garden of the Gods, or the numerous other natural attractions. Guidebooks mention the town occasionally, usually in promoting it as a veritable oasis for tourists and settlers alike who might find adjacent Colorado Springs a bit too dry for their liking; Palmer strictly forbade the selling, manufacturing, and consumption of alcohol in his town.<sup>63</sup>

### **Conclusion: Where God Spends Most of His Time**

In 1976, a century after Colorado became a state, Merle Haggard released his chart-topping album, *The Roots of My Raising*, making popular Dave Kirby's song "Colorado." In the tune, the country crooner famously figures that "...if God doesn't live in Colorado / I'll bet that's where he spends most of his time." Yet as this chapter has shown, the song is evidence of a persisting nineteenth-century rhetoric that assigned moral value to various elements of Colorado's topography. It suggests that the purposes and uses of the land were divinely apportioned. What evolved was a sense of indisputable,

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<sup>63</sup> Hall, *History of the State of Colorado*, 1:181, 292; Marshall Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies: The Life and Good Times of Colorado Springs*, 4th ed., 1997 rev. (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1987), 1, 26–27.

immovable, and perfect spatial logic that comes to life in the opening line of the song:  
“There’s a place where Mother Nature’s got it all together.”<sup>64</sup>

The moral rhetoric of nineteenth-century Eastern travel writers shaped expectation and experiences that would later provide a convenient justification for the inequities of the Tortilla Curtain. As the next chapter explores, the constant allusions to the miraculous healing properties of water, mountains, and air in Colorado Springs led to a booming upper-class resort industry, beginning with the opening of elite tuberculosis sanitariums and culminating in some of the West’s grandest resorts, particularly The Broadmoor. Meanwhile, Pueblo’s less desirable and, therefore, more expendable environs made it a perfect place for some of the most intense industrialization in the West, most notably the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company’s colossal Minnequa Steelworks. What began as a rather subtle explanation for differences in the landscape evolved into a gulf between labor and leisure that first delimited the Tortilla Curtain.

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<sup>64</sup> Merle Haggard, *Colorado, Album, The Roots of My Raising* (Capitol, 1976).



## CHAPTER 2

### PALACES AND PORCHES, SILVER AND GOLD: THE SPACES OF LABOR AND LEISURE AND COLORADO'S TORTILLA CURTAIN

The editor of the *Pueblo Chieftain* proclaimed it “the eighth wonder of the world.” The *New York Evening Post* agreed, hailing it as “...one of the most remarkable buildings ever erected.” President Benjamin Harrison went out of his way to visit the vast worksite even before the building’s completion. Promoters lauded its opening on July 4, 1891, as the “proudest day in the history of the City of Pueblo,” and the event drew a crowd exceeding 40,000 people. The magnificent Colorado Mineral Palace (Figure 2.1) was an edifice of superlatives. Measuring 243 feet long, 142 feet wide, and over eighty feet high, the building was massive. “The twenty-eight columns on the outside of the building, in connection with the four enormous globes at each corner, give the edifice a truly palatial appearance,” observed *The American Architect and Building News*. “No words can



Figure 2.1. Colorado Mineral Palace at its opening in 1891. *Pueblo Chieftain*.

adequately describe the cunning workmanship and artistic beauty that is being wrought in this Mineral Palace. It is a thing that must be seen to be understood, studied to be appreciated.”<sup>1</sup>



Figure 2.2. Interior of the Colorado Mineral Palace showing the area beneath the main dome. Flanking the grotto stage are Queen Silver (left) and King Coal (right). *Pueblo Chieftain*.

Drawing the greatest accolades was the interior, designed by Levy of New York to showcase quite literally the mineral wealth of Colorado. At the bases of the building's fifty interior pillars and pilasters were glass cases displaying the namesake mineral exhibition, the largest collection in the United States and perhaps the world. The ceiling above the pillars consisted of twenty-eight domes; most measured fourteen feet across, but the pair flanking the central dome was forty-two feet in diameter. The central dome

<sup>1</sup> "The President: A Visit to the Mining Districts of Colorado.," *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1891, 5; "Opened the Mineral Palace: Independence Day at Pueblo, Colo., Made a State Celebration," *Chicago Tribune*, July 5, 1891, 10; "Colorado's Mineral Palace," *The American Architect and Building News*, April 26, 1890, 55.

itself spanned a whopping seventy-five feet, making it, at that time, the largest interior dome on Earth. It topped out at sixty-two feet above the floor. Beneath the dome was a large stage fashioned to resemble a grotto, complete with a mechanized prospector and mule train that ascended a mountain slope. Presiding on either side of the stage were the massive statues of Colorado's monarchs, Queen Silver and King Coal (Figure 2.2).

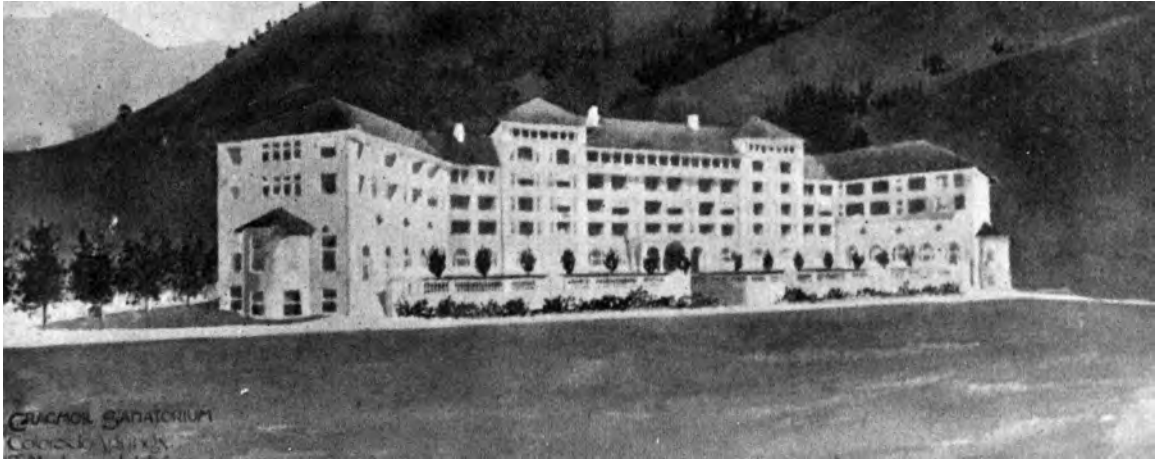


Figure 2.3. Architect Thomas MacLaren's rendering of the main building of Cragmor Sanatorium, as proposed. Douglas R. McKay, *Asylum of the Gilded Pill*.

A decade later, dreamers in Colorado Springs envisioned an equally fantastic “Sun palace,” intended to be the most medically sophisticated—and luxurious—tuberculosis sanitarium in the world (Figure 2.3). The lead doctor and architect designed and situated the building to maximize Colorado Springs's most lauded curative attributes: clean mountain air, sparkling mineral water, and copious sunshine. Led by the work of the town's foremost physician and booster, Dr. Samuel Edwin Solly, architect Thomas MacLaren planned a magnificent building of ample private rooms and porches arrayed in such a way that every one of them received as much sunlight as possible during the day. Overall the building resembled the great Gilded Age resorts such as the Mount

Washington Hotel or Kaaterskill Hotel. MacLaren initially figured the building would cost between \$300,000 and \$350,000 but estimates later soared to \$700,000.<sup>2</sup>

Although the plan initially faltered, Cragmor nonetheless became a reality and soon attracted wealthy consumptives from across the United States.<sup>3</sup> With a sumptuous facility and some of the best tuberculosis physicians of the age, Cragmore became the gold standard for not just tuberculosis treatment but leisured recreation in Colorado. In 1924, the National Tuberculosis Association, which usually avoided endorsements, deemed Cragmor “the most desirable sanatorium in the world.” The institution helped pave the way for the opening of seventeen more health resorts and hospitals in Colorado Springs and incubated a tourist industry in the city that jumped from just 50,000 visitors in 1915 to 200,000 in 1920. Indeed, Cragmor invented twentieth-century Colorado Springs. At a 1950s gathering that celebrated living pioneers and early residents, sixty percent indicated that they had arrived in Colorado Springs due in some part to tuberculosis. It was “the most delightful place on earth in which to live—or die.”<sup>4</sup>

While the Mineral Palace and Cragmor Sanatorium were the preeminent edifices in these adjacent and closely linked Colorado cities, they could not have been more unlike. These buildings represented two vastly different and often opposing paradigms

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas R. McKay, *Asylum of the Gilded Pill: The Story of Cragmor Sanatorium*, 2nd ed. (Denver: State Historical Society of Colorado, 1990), 20–21.

<sup>3</sup> When Cragmor Sanatorium opened to its first patients on June 20, 1905, it was merely a collection of cottages and support buildings spread over 110 acres. But Dr. Solly’s worsening health and eventual death on November 19, 1906, left the institution without its visionary leader. The number of patients dropped precipitously through 1906 and the institution was abandoned. When scattered members of Cragmor’s board of trustees inspected the facility the following spring, they found it “in a state of wretched disrepair: broken panes, ripped screens, stolen furnishings, vandalized equipment.” One of the cabins had even burned down. But Colorado Springs boosters realized the importance of the sanitarium and immediately rebuilt and reopened. See McKay, *Asylum of the Gilded Pill*, 28–29, 24–35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 82–83.

of Colorado. One view was of a state of unprecedented mineral wealth, of untold riches below the ground awaiting only human labor to extract them from nature and, through the miracle of modern industry, turn them into useful commodities. But another view celebrated Colorado above the ground: its majestic, endless mountains; bracing, clean air; and abundant sunshine. These were gifts from God meant to heal bodies and souls. One view celebrated a Colorado of labor and industry; the other a Colorado of leisure.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, these buildings and the cities that hosted them represented competing views of the future of America's political economy. The turmoil of the late nineteenth century, particularly the two decades between the demonetization of silver in 1873 and the panic of 1893, fortified the labor-leisure boundary between Pueblo and Colorado Springs. Pueblo became a battleground for free silver, of labor rights, and of Western populism. Colorado Springs, on the other hand, profited from the gold standard while a class of European and Eastern elites fortified their power and protected lives of leisure. At the same time, Colorado's second cities attempted to come out of the shadow of Denver and craft their own identities, most notably through the fostering of distinctive architectural vernaculars.

Thus America's battle between gold and silver—the preeminent economic and political feud of the late nineteenth century—had a real geography and manifested itself in the built environment. The front-line of this epic economic served as the foundation for a class and, later, racial divide that would become Colorado's Tortilla Curtain.

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the concept of Colorado above the ground versus below the ground, see Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010).

### **“The Palace of Industrial Peace”**

In the decades following the Civil War, the unheralded prosperity of heavy industry and high finance transformed American cities and their citizens away from a commonly shared “republican heritage” toward a far more stratified class structure, in which the “owners of capital decisively shaped economic change and the newly emerging societies.”<sup>6</sup> A reordering of urban space followed suit, leading to the rise of more economically segregated cities, parks, and suburbs. Yet the sites of heavy industry presented both problems and opportunities for elites reimagining the American city. Many pulled away from the dirt and din of production to the seclusion of suburban estates. At the same time they embraced the utter spectacle of the urban-industrial landscape and its ability to overawe as potential tourist attractions and the locus of promotion. The industrial sublime was, as Zoltán Simon argues, a “double-edged sword” because as Americans became more obsessed with the sites of industrial production the workers within them became invisible. “What was most admired about American factories was the autonomy with which many spectators invested the technology amassed there...apparently requiring little or no human intervention....It was the inherent nature of the rhetoric of the industrial sublime...that ignored the human element of the industrial landscape.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Zoltán Simon, *The Double-Edged Sword: The Technological Sublime in American Novels Between 1900 and 1940* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2003), 25; John R. Stilgoe, *Metropolitan Corridor: Railroads and the American Scene* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 126. For more about the industrial sublime, see the work of David E. Nye, particularly *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1994) and *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of New Technology, 1880-1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990).

And Pueblo exuded the industrial sublime. By 1890, 181 manufacturing industries were situated in or near the city. They employed 12,000 people and accounted for nineteen percent of all wages earned in Colorado. In addition to the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's emerging Minnequa Works, the city hosted three major ore smelting operations that operated twenty blast furnaces able to refine 1,050 tons of ore a day.<sup>8</sup> The industrial sublime impressed even those involved in its inner workings. A visitor "...would be greatly interested in the Minnequa Works, particularly when they are completed as I think that there are (a) few places where in our yard one can see the entire transformation from the crude iron ore into rails, merchant iron, wire and tin plate," wrote Charles McHarg II, secretary-treasurer of the CF&I's Bessemer Ditch Company, to his daughter, Alice. "Even at present, I presume, the large amount of construction work going on in the different departments might have a particular interest for one who knows just how it is to be worked out and what each thing will be when it is finished. It would be very interesting to go through the works with him...." Yet while McHarg was fascinated with construction and operation of the Minnequa Works, he never mentions the workers who made it possible.<sup>9</sup>

At the forefront of promoting the wonder of the industrial sublime without the messiness of laborers was the industrial palace movement, which promoted a city's or state's principal industries in a highly contrived and controlled space, far removed from the factories and laborers themselves. As Robert Rydell argues, world's fairs, and by

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<sup>8</sup> George A.H. Baxter, "History of Pueblo City and County," Typescript, (1942), chap. 6, p. 4, mss. 41, box 2, scrapbook, Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center, History Colorado, Denver.

<sup>9</sup> Charles King McHarg II to Alice Brown McHarg, April 26, 1903, mss. 2100, box 1, folder 21, Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center, History Colorado, Denver.

extension industrial palaces, were powerful statements about the organization of the ideal society, culture, and economy in a time of great upheaval and uncertainty, an organization that overwhelmingly embraced a white, middle- and upper-class ethic. “World’s fairs performed a hegemonic function precisely because they propagated ideas and values of the country’s political, financial, corporate, and intellectual leaders and offered these ideas as the proper interpretation of social and political reality.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, promoters originally intended the Mineral Palace not as a shrine to the struggles of hard rock or coal miners, smelter laborers, or steelworkers, but as a “tributary to the king industry of the Rocky Mountains, the mining of precious metals.”<sup>11</sup>

The industrial palace movement followed a trend set by the 1876 Centennial Exhibition, in Philadelphia, and reached its climax with the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, in Chicago.<sup>12</sup> Opening between those events were an Ice Palace, in Minneapolis; a Corn Palace, in Sioux City; and the Spring Palace, in Fort Worth.<sup>13</sup> And industrial palace fever caught on quite early in Colorado. In the early 1880s that state’s legendary boosters Horace Tabor and William Loveland promoted the creation of an exposition of the state’s vast mineral wealth and burgeoning industrial might. The

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<sup>10</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Milton B. Ochs, *The Heart of the Rockies* (Colorado Springs: Passenger Department of the Colorado Midland Railway, 1890), 42.

<sup>12</sup> The Mineral Palace figured prominently in Colorado’s contributions to the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition, in Chicago. The women of Colorado created a miniature of the Mineral Palace, wrought in precious metals, to be exhibited at the fair and to hold the decorative hammer Mrs. Potter Palmer used to drive in the last nail of the Woman’s Building. Also, Queen Silver, a gift of the people of Aspen, visited the exposition before being installed permanently in the Mineral Palace. See “Design for the Nebraska Hammer: Silver and Gold and Precious Stones Used in Its Delicate Construction,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1892, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Ochs, *The Heart of the Rockies*, 42; David E. Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1992); Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair*.



National Mining and Industrial Exposition opened in the summer of 1882 on a forty-acre site along South Broadway, in Denver. The exposition reopened for the summers of 1883 and 1884. But like many of the era's expositions, the thrill of the spectacle wore off and the crowds diminished before the enormous building costs—and ever-mounting operating debt—could be repaid. The exposition never reopened.<sup>14</sup> Despite its close thematic and geographic proximity to the National Mining and Industrial Exhibition, the Colorado Mineral Palace was more closely related to the Texas Spring Palace, a celebration of the state's agricultural, mineral, and industrial wealth. Both were the brainchildren of Thomas F. Nelson, an accomplished marketer and Denver-based manager of the Denver & Fort Worth Railroad's advertising department.<sup>15</sup>

Pueblo boosters saw the Mineral Palace as both a way to promote tourism and as a crown—the definitive statement of the city's industrial prowess over archrival Denver. But its location on the North Side had much more to do with securing the investments of wealthy land speculators, among them many from Denver. The exhibition's incorporators, Puebloans W.W. Palmer, Ferd Barndollar, and O.H.P. Baxter, all had extensive landholdings north of downtown Pueblo. As well, Colorado Mineral Palace Company officers and directors A.W. Chamberlin, Donald Fletcher, and Henry A. Brown all hailed from Denver and owned Pueblo North Side subdivisions. Tellingly it was Brown, owner of the eponymous Brown Palace, Denver's most elite hotel, who provided the land for the Mineral Palace and its extensive grounds.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and David McComb, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 3rd ed. (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1994), 120–1.

<sup>15</sup> Ochs, *The Heart of the Rockies*, 42.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Among the most notable North Side developers associated with the Mineral Palace was Ferd Barndollar, who in 1869 joined with Denver real estate speculators Henry Brown and David H. Moffat, and his local partner, John R. Lowther, in acquiring land north of the County Addition. In early 1871, surveyors platted two subdivisions for Barndollar. To make his neighborhoods more attractive, despite their then inconvenient distances from downtown, Barndollar fully graded streets, planted trees, and constructed model homes, including his own residence. Barndollar's development efforts became even more grandiose in 1888, when he platted the Dundee Place subdivision, one of the most innovative planned neighborhoods in Colorado. As with his previous development, Barndollar constructed unusual model homes to generate news and attract the curious, who would hopefully become buyers. Dundee Place was also the first subdivision in Pueblo—and one of the first in Colorado—to institute protective covenants. These included restrictions on planting cottonwood trees, “which turn the ladys’ [sic] black dresses white.” Yet the most influential of these rules may have been a minimum building cost. Barndollar wanted to create the most exclusive neighborhood in Pueblo and successfully petitioned the City to change the name of High Street to Grand Avenue; he envisioned the thoroughfare eventually rivaling Denver's Broadway.<sup>17</sup>

Regardless of whether or not it ever helped sell a North Side lot, the Colorado Mineral Palace represented the pinnacle of Pueblo's unbridled optimism as it became one of the fastest growing cities in the United States and the unrivalled industrial center of the West. The building's very walls pulled together the mineral wealth of Colorado to Pueblo, just as the smelters and steel mill were doing. Materials included “gray granite from

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<sup>17</sup> Adam Thomas, *Pueblo's North Side Neighborhood* (Estes Park, Colo.: Historitecture, 2007), 21–24.

Georgetown, Silver Plume, and Gunnison, red granite from Platte Cañon and sandstone from Manitou, Fort Collins, St. Vrain, and Castle Rock, together with marble from Crystal...used in these columns.”<sup>18</sup> Inside, the “walls will be constructed of wood and covered with designs in crusted ores and minerals—native gold, platinum, silver, mercury, copper, etc., and the various ores of the same. Specular and magnetic iron, chromic iron, pyrites, galena, quartz, mica, beryl, tourmaline, garnet, asbestos, brucite, fluorspar, coal in all its varieties, etc., etc., will be used as pigments.”<sup>19</sup>

Much was at stake as promoters tried to counter the perception of the same Eastern tastemakers who had described Pueblo as a city of adobe dirt a generation earlier. Unfortunately, despite the palace’s overwhelming display of mineral wealth and Barndollar’s many improvements, the North Side was far from complete when the Mineral Palace opened. Muddy and dusty streets, untended, undeveloped lots, and even violent crime plagued the area. As heavy construction wrapped up in the spring of 1890, the *Pueblo Chieftain* attempted to shame North Side property owners by pointing out how the Mineral Palace “materially improved” their property values. The newspaper implored residents and property owners to construct sidewalks, “by which Pueblo Pride may be approached.” The appearance of the neighborhoods between Union Depot and the Mineral Palace was ground zero in Pueblo’s effort to create a refined image. “If it [the Mineral Palace] is to be comfortably reached only by carriage or electric car it might as well have been located a mile or two further away from the city. It is necessary that sidewalks be constructed very soon on at least one street leading to the Palace, and also that they be good ones, such as the kind of people who will visit the Palace—people from

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<sup>18</sup> “Colorado’s Mineral Palace,” 55.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

the old and well paved cities of the east—can walk on without falling down.”<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the *Chieftain*’s criticism proved fateful. While the palace’s opening day was a success, a downpour damped bodies and spirits. “...The mud was so deep that most of the citizens failed to get through the alkali swamp and sage brush thickets in time to appear in the grand march.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Queen Silver and Free Silver**

Somewhere between the hyperbolic enthusiasm of the Mineral Palace and the muddy streets of the North Side was the reality of a lingering economic crisis that stunted Pueblo’s growth for a generation and threatened to escalate into civil war. For some, the Mineral Palace was as much a political statement as it was a tourist attraction. Despite her luxurious new quarters in Pueblo, Queen Silver was an impotent monarch whose once prosperous reign was now much mourned in Colorado. The source of her ruin, at least to many Westerners, was a federal monetary policy that favored wealthy Eastern and European elites at the expense of Midwestern farmers and Rocky Mountain miners.

The Fourth Coinage Act, also known as the Mint Act of 1873—the Crime of 1873 to poor Westerners and populists—demonetized silver and effectively placed the United States on a gold standard. The boom in silver production in Colorado mines had already driven down the price on the domestic market; the loss of the government market finished the job. Suddenly the value of Colorado’s preeminent metal collapsed.<sup>22</sup> But the decline

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<sup>20</sup> “Mineral Palace,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, May 30, 1890, 4.

<sup>21</sup> “‘Coin’ as a Land Boomer: W.H. Harvey’s Attempt to Make a Metropolis Out of Pueblo,” *New York Sun*, June 2, 1895, 4.

<sup>22</sup> Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith, *A Colorado History*, 8th ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 2001), 208–209.

in silver prices not only affected Colorado's mines but also its smelters, railroads, supply companies, banks, indeed almost every aspect of the state's economy. And the panic of 1893 only exacerbated a bad situation. By September, 377 Colorado businesses had failed, and 435 mines, nearly half of all mines in the state, closed. In Pueblo, the steel mill fell silent; its owners furloughed their workers and mothballed the works. Statewide, 45,000 people were out of work.<sup>23</sup>

For Westerners, the issue was clear: Eastern plutocrats had infected Washington in a greedy gamble to rob them—the farmers, the miners, the industrial workers—of the fruits of their own labor. More galling, while Westerners had less money in their pockets, the *de facto* adoption of a gold standard eased trade, particularly Eastern trade, with countries that had also adopted currencies based on gold, notably the United Kingdom. And anti-gold populism hit a crescendo in 1896 when activists took over the Democratic Party, booted pro-gold Grover Cleveland, and handed the nomination to William Jennings Bryan. The solution to the monetary crisis, Bryan and his ilk argued, was free silver or bimetallism—a silver and gold standard. Silver coinage, generally based on a ratio of sixteen ounces of silver to one ounce of gold, would cause inflation but render money cheaper, empowering debtors over creditors and putting more cash in the pockets of working people. "...[I]nstead of having a gold standard because England has, we will restore bimetallism, and then let England have bimetallism because the United States has it," Bryan railed at the 1896 Democratic National Convention in perhaps his most famous

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 218.

speech. "...You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."<sup>24</sup>

Standing at the epicenter of the crisis, it is no surprise that Pueblo hosted some of the most prolific free silver thinkers, activists, and even radicals in the United States. Among the most notable was Benjamin Mattice, who in 1860 stumped for Abraham Lincoln in New York, a favor for which the President awarded Mattice a post in the Department of Treasury, where he thrived. In 1872, Mattice moved to the vast plains of Otero County, Colorado Territory, and tried his hand at cattle ranching. But rural life did not suit the former urban attorney, who soon moved westward to Pueblo and eventually developed one of the city's most unusual residential subdivisions. At a time when other members of his class constructed large homes in South Pueblo or on the North Side, Mattice chose to build a modest cottage on the city's undeveloped lower East Side. It was there that Mattice realized developers provided numerous options for middle-class buyers in South Pueblo and the North Side but none catered to the city's burgeoning working class. Thus Mattice's Addition to the City of Pueblo (1888) and the Mattice and Gibson Addition (1889) offered small, affordable building lots close to the smelters, steelworks, railroads, and other employers. By 1893 Mattice's additions were densely settled and included grocery stores, barbershops, churches, and other services in marked contrast to the efforts of middle-class developers north of Third Street, where development remained tepid at best. That same year approximately half of the residents were laborers at either the Pueblo Smelting & Refining Company or one of the city's several railroads. "Indeed,

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<sup>24</sup> William Jennings Bryan, "William Jennings Bryan Democratic National Convention Address," *American Rhetoric Online Speech Bank*, accessed November 16, 2014, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/williamjenningsbryan1896dnc.htm>.

Mattice's Addition and the Mattice Subdivision combined were the first identifiably, truly cohesive neighborhood in East Pueblo" and made up the city's first working-class neighborhood.<sup>25</sup>

Mattice's writings, including an address prepared for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition and *Free Coinage of Silver: The Gold Dollar, the Dishonest Dollar*, suggest that his social and political views played out in the space of the lower East Side. Mattice was not a rabid, free-market capitalist like his Pueblo peers, but an early populist progressive, verging on socialist. His overwhelming concern was the impact the demonetization of silver had had on labor. Mattice frequently repeated the phrase "labor is the only producer," and as such "labor is also the correct measure of all values." Mattice also articulated a line of thought that would dominate the free silver and populist movements: gold stood in for an oppressive, greedy elite; silver was the metal of working people. "The fact is, the gold dollar is the dishonest dollar, made so by unjust and unfair legislation, and the demonetization of silver is a fraud perpetuated by a trick of the law upon the people, which ultimately rolls its crushing burden upon the laboring classes."<sup>26</sup>

In 1897 another East Side labor activist and ardent socialist Henry O. Morris penned an even more radical view. Morris arrived with his family in Pueblo in September 1874 at the age of nineteen. At first he was a reporter for the *Pueblo Chieftain* and later worked in insurance and real estate, dabbling mainly in ranch sales. From his small

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<sup>25</sup> Jeffrey DeHerrera and Adam Thomas, *A Place Set Apart: The History and Architecture of Pueblo's East Side Neighborhood* (Estes Park, Colo.: Historitecture, 2009), 44–45.

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin Mattice, "Mr. Benjamin Mattice of Pueblo, Colo.," in *World's Congress of Bankers and Financiers*, by World's Congress of Bankers and Financiers (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Company, 1893), 333–335.

cottage in what had become Pueblo's largest working-class neighborhood, Morris could see the smoke-belching stacks of the various smelters and the steelworks and watch the flow of humanity to and from those behemoths. At the same time, William McKinley's victory over Bryan cemented the pro-gold position and enraged Morris. His novel, *Waiting for the Signal*, followed the violent overthrow of the federal government and corporate plutocrats and the installation of a new constitution that would compensate "victims of the greed for gold."<sup>27</sup> "The revolution is sure to come—it is on the way," Morris predicted in a preface to the third edition. "I leave it to the reader to guess when the storm will burst."<sup>28</sup>

Yet no Pueblo populist and free silver activist could match the popularity and



Figure 2.4. William Hope "Coin" Harvey. Wikimedia (public domain).

eccentricity of William Hope "Coin" Harvey (Figure 2.4), one of Bryan's key advisors as well as the originator of the sixteen-to-one formula. And perhaps no figure loomed as largely in crafting the Colorado Mineral Palace. Indeed, the Mineral Palace evolved from the same mind and at the same time as the "bible of the inflationists," "the magic talisman of...every one in debt and distress in the '90s...."<sup>29</sup> The pamphlet "Coin's Financial School," first published in 1894, sold over two million copies, at

<sup>27</sup> Henry O. Morris, *Waiting for the Signal*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Schulte Publishing Co., 1897), chap. XVIII.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., ix; Wilbur Fiske Stone, ed., "Henry O. Morris," in *History of Colorado*, vol. III (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918), 226.

<sup>29</sup> Edward H. Collins, "Economics and Finance: Apostle of Common Sense—I," *New York Times*, June 14, 1948, sec. business financial, 30; "Bryan's Advance Agent," *New York Times*, July 5, 1931, 33.



one point selling 5,000 prints a day. A *New York Times* retrospective of forgotten best sellers derided Harvey for pretending that the pamphlet was the record of an actual meeting of Chicago's financial and media titans and, especially, for its dangerously simplistic, convoluted monetary analysis. Nonetheless, it had to concede that the "dismally printed packet of dynamite" was enormously popular and persuasive: "Out on the plains of the West, and in the mountains and beyond, Populists, Greenbackers, Anti-Monopolists, Agrarians, Knights of Labor and Socialists, one and all they bought and read and studied 'Coin's Financial School.' They discussed it amid the corn shocks, in the wheat fields, in mine dryhouses, up the arid gullies of Utah and Idaho, in the logging camps of Oregon and Puget Sound. And they forgot their assorted and conflicting dogmas for once and voted for Free Silver and the Boy Orator of the Platte (William Jennings Bryan)." <sup>30</sup>

The popularity of "Coin's Financial School" stemmed from the simplicity of its argument and its ability to blame a distinct few for the misery of many. The pamphlet "...was written...in a manner skillfully calculated to play on the economic illiteracy and the class and regional prejudices of its readers." <sup>31</sup> According to Harvey, the demonetization of silver in 1873 was part of a larger plot by Eastern and European, especially London-based, financiers, who held vast gold reserves, to shrink the pool of available money in the United States, thereby curtailing the country's economic prosperity while consolidating their own wealth and power. Like Mattice, Harvey located the true source of wealth at the moment a raw material transforms into a marketable

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<sup>30</sup> Stewart Holbrook, "Professor Coin, Financial Wizard," *New York Times*, October 15, 1944, sec. Book Review, 5.

<sup>31</sup> Collins, "Economics and Finance," 30.

commodity, placing labor in the center of his economic scheme. “Gold was considered the money of the rich. It was owned, principally by that class of people, and the poor people seldom handled it, and the very poor people seldom ever saw any of it,” he concluded. “The men who produce the property of the world are the men whose happiness should be consulted. The men who handle this property after it is produced have little regard for the interests of the producers. Their selfishness and greed blind them. Their minds are running in a groove and they cannot see the rights of others.”<sup>32</sup>

Detractors of “Coin’s Financial School” were many and vocal, but most struggled to overcome Harvey’s simple and utterly convincing prose. “This production was one of the most adroitly constructed menaces of slippery sophism ever put together for popular consumption,” argued the *Wall Street Journal*, one of Harvey’s staunchest critics. “How to answer it effectively was a problem over which this newspaper struggled long hours.... The trouble was that ‘Coin’ Harvey’s tract was about as hard to grapple as a jellyfish or a mass of fine sand.”<sup>33</sup>

And jellyfish would certainly describe William Hope Harvey, who arrived in Pueblo from Buffalo, New York, via Huntington, West Virginia, and the boomtowns of Kansas, in 1888. He was one part huckster, another part practical joker, and all visionary. Indeed, extracting his elaborate pranks from his more serious endeavors is nearly impossible, including his early attempt to make Pueblo the Mardi Gras capital of the West, which ended in predictable bacchanalia and chaos. Harvey reveled in playing the fool and plotting the ridiculous. It was good marketing. “Mystery is desirable, my boy,”

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<sup>32</sup> William Hope Harvey, *Coin’s Financial School* (Chicago: Coin Publishing Co., 1894), 8–9, 26.

<sup>33</sup> “‘Sandy’ Noyes,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 24, 1945, 6.

he once quipped, “keep your eye on us.”<sup>34</sup> What is clear is that like his fellow Mineral Palace investors, Harvey came to Pueblo to get rich in real estate speculation as the town’s boom, served on a plate of silver, seemed inexhaustible.

Yet Harvey’s own failure at Pueblo real estate speculation, coupled with his faltering Colorado mining investments, likely propelled his anti-gold crusade. The booster purchased an enormous tract of desert scrubland far north of developed sections of the city and east of Fountain Creek. Like General Palmer in Colorado Springs, Harvey envisioned north of Pueblo a lush suburb that surrendered the unrelenting grid-plan of North Side development to the garden suburbs emerging on the fringes of Eastern cities. His landscape architect developed plans for the grounds, surveyors staked out lots, and Harvey hired gardeners who transformed some of the alkali sinks into ponds. He envisioned a stately boulevard, complete with electric streetcars, extending from the city to the suburb. At the center of the development Harvey planned a lush country club to rival anything in Colorado Springs or Denver. He even constructed a beautiful stone and brick resort, the Fountain Lake Hotel, dripping in Queen Anne ornament and boasting a menagerie of whimsical turrets and gables, as well as wide, shady verandas. And while Harvey managed to sell some \$50 lots via mail order to unwitting Eastern buyers, site-unseen of course, the scheme crumbled spectacularly, especially during the silver depression. Not a single house had been constructed. Then Eastern investors picked apart the carcass of Harvey’s dream at rock-bottom prices. As for the hotel, it closed a year after opening. “...Nothing remained but the beautiful hotel, which stands to-day out

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<sup>34</sup> “‘Coin’ as a Land Boomer,” 4.

among the bleak and barren hills just as far as ever from town, while the wide verandas are occupied only by an occasional jack rabbit seeking shelter from a storm.”<sup>35</sup>

The Mineral Palace was likely a last-ditch scheme to rescue Harvey’s Fountain Lake suburb, and it was most likely Harvey, in concert with architect Otto Burlow, who developed the Mineral Palace’s most unusual feature, its “modernized Egyptian” architecture. Overall, the building reflected the same neoclassical, particularly Greek, aesthetics that proliferated among grand exhibition buildings, most spectacularly at the Court of Honor, or White City, of the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. The capitals, pedestals, and friezes were suggestive of Egyptian designs without being overtly Egyptian. Yet the enormous globes at each corner, painted to resemble the continents and oceans, were truly inexplicable. Bulow embraced architectural whimsy. Some of his existing buildings, including the Beaumont Hotel, in Ouray, and Routt Hall, at Colorado State University, are difficult to classify architecturally because the elements are quite fanciful, deriving from no particular order.

As for Harvey, he had a life-long fascination with ancient cultures. Indeed, his growing disenchantment with gold society, and particularly McKinley’s election, led him to conclude the end of civilization was at hand. Thus in 1900 Harvey left Chicago, where he had been living since at least 1896 following his departure from Pueblo, and began building a utopian resort at Monte Ne, Arkansas, near Gravette; its centerpiece was a massive, concrete pyramid, that would “transmit to posterity the story of our civilization,” a “‘marker’ of the twentieth century.” At the pyramid’s core, Harvey would seal the knowledge of the present age in a sixteen-foot square room with walls of concrete eight-

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

feet thick.<sup>36</sup> Harvey allegedly consulted with geologists to determine that in a million years only the cap of the pyramid would remain above the ground. A plaque on the cap included this order: “When this can be read, go below and find a record and the cause of the death of a former civilization.”<sup>37</sup>

While the Arkansas pyramid represented doomsday, the Mineral Palace was Harvey’s attempt to save humanity. He transformed the building from a spectacle of the industrial sublime into a temple dedicated to the wisdom of free silver and the preservation of bimetallism. In 1891, Colorado’s huge, statewide Fourth of July festivities came to Pueblo, where revelers celebrated the grand opening of the Colorado Mineral Palace. And free silver claimed the culmination of the event. “To find out just how the people of the State stand upon the silver question, a vote will be taken to decided whether or not they favor the free and unlimited coinage of silver or prefer a restriction to the product of American mines.”<sup>38</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Mineral Palace quickly became the locus of free silver populism. On July 28, only weeks after the building opened, a crowd of between 7,000 and 8,000 gathered to hear General James B. Weaver, People’s Party presidential candidate, and populist firebrand Mary E. Lease. (Colorado was one of four states Weaver actually carried in the 1892 election.)<sup>39</sup> As a public space, the Mineral Palace hosted some anti-silver movements as well, but they were strange hybrids. The state’s

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<sup>36</sup> “Arkansas to Have Pyramid for Future Archaeologists: ‘Coin’ Harvey Is Building Monument to Tell Story of Present Civilization to Distant Ages,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1926.

<sup>37</sup> “Bryan’s Advance Agent,” 33. Most of the site of Monte Ne disappeared under the waters of Beaver Lake in 1964.

<sup>38</sup> “Colorado’s Pride: The Great Mineral Palace to Be Opened on the Fourth,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1891, 1.

<sup>39</sup> “Weaver on the Stump,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 29, 1892, 2.

Republicans met there in September 1892 and dropped their own silver initiative in a show of solidarity behind Harrison. But huge crowds continued to turn out to hear many populists and free silver advocates who stumped at the Mineral Palace, including William Jennings Bryan.<sup>40</sup> But more than anything, the Mineral Palace came to represent spatially a class finding itself increasingly disillusioned and disenfranchised in the Gilded Age. Pueblo's populists, particularly Harvey, were quite sensitive to the issue. For him, silver and the working class were inseparable and "the silver product of the country should not be discriminated against."

Beyond the free silver issue, the Mineral Palace was an attempt by Pueblo's boosters to reconcile Pueblo's industrial grittiness with the rest of Colorado's leisure-based tourism by overtly embracing the mineral wealth that made possible the smelters and the resorts alike. Unlike Colorado Springs, where the landscape—Pikes Peak, the Garden of the Gods, Cheyenne Cañon—was celebrated as the source of leisure, the mineral palace embraced Colorado underground. The interior space itself was highly controlled and contrived to block out Pueblo's desert landscape, particularly sunlight. The original plans demanded "no straggling ray of sunlight may invade the spacious inner hall or chamber." Instead, the domes would be lighted artificially, exhibiting the wondrous produce of King Coal. "Thousands of electric lights...will diffuse a mellow radiance over the gay throngs beneath."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> "Colorado All Right: Republicans Drop Silver for the Party Success," *Chicago Tribune*, September 9, 1892, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Sterner Remple, "Your Mineral Palace (1937)," *Pueblo Lore* 36, no. 2 (February 2010): 9.

## Little London

In perhaps the most famous image from “Coin’s Financial School,” the horrifying Rothschilds devil fish, identified as the English Octopus, which “feeds on nothing but gold,” reaches out and strangles the countries of the world with its many forked tentacles (Figure 2.5). In another, Coin applauds as Uncle Sam shoots the English lion from a cannon. Yet another depicts a well-dressed “ruffian,” identified as England, brutalizing a young woman, wearing the sash “prosperity,” as she tries to free the prisoner “silver” from his shackles.<sup>42</sup> With an impressive lack of subtlety, Harvey linked the issue of free silver to American patriotism and anti-English sentiment. Yet, forty miles north of his Mineral Palace, Colorado Springs proudly promoted itself as “Little London.” With roots among the Eastern aristocracy and millionaires of the gold boom at Cripple Creek, this was a different America than Coin Harvey imagined. Colorado Springs was a gold city in a silver state.

Colorado Springs’s founders purposely forged its connection with the English aristocracy at city’s inception. Its founder, General William Jackson Palmer, was a Philadelphia-born Quaker who first traveled to England in 1855 as a young man. On his first trip to England, the disparity between the working classes and the aristocracy shocked Palmer and his Quaker simplicity and sensibility. But as his own success bred increased privilege, Palmer came to admire England and the power of its elites. Indeed, Palmer’s wife and daughters spent much of their lives in England, and the general populated Colorado Springs with English expatriates. Palmer admitted his conversion in a lengthy letter to financier George Foster Peabody:

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<sup>42</sup> Harvey, *Coin’s Financial School*, 124–125.





hour.... You will have plenty to do will you not, in looking after all these colonies?”<sup>44</sup>

While Palmer grew to admire the political power and lifestyle of the English aristocracy, his close friend and confidant, Englishman Dr. William Bell, actively boosted the Fountain Colony as Little London. In 1872 he began constructing his own English manor, Briarhurst, at Manitou Springs, replete with proper English servants. Among his first guests was Anglican luminary Rev. Charles Kingsley, who came to the mineral springs in an effort to recover from a cold contracted during his American tour. Bell used the visit to launch a campaign to lure his fellow countrymen to Colorado Springs. In particular, he targeted the younger sons of the gentry, who did not stand to inherit ancestral lands but possessed, nonetheless, the refinement both Palmer and Bell cherished. Because of his efforts, by the late 1880s about one in four El Paso County residents was a former or current British citizen. As Frances Wolcott quipped, “Colorado Springs took to tea and crumpets every afternoon at five ahead of New York and Boston.”<sup>45</sup>

The English aristocracy was not alone in Colorado Springs; nobility, displaced by the same financial upheavals that shook the United States, arrived in the town as well. Perhaps the most notable was Count James de Pourtales, a Huguenot descendent and heir of Glumbowitz, Prussian Silesia, in what is now Poland. Pourtales arrived in Colorado Springs in 1884 and initially sought to apply his knowledge of German scientific farming to William Willcox’s failed Broadmoor dairy operation, at the foot of Cheyenne

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>45</sup> Marshall Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies: The Life and Good Times of Colorado Springs*, 4th ed., 1997 rev. (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1987), 67–68. The original Briarhurst burned in 1886 but was rebuilt even grander the following year and remains a prominent Manitou Springs landmark.

Mountain, in a little-traveled area southwest of town. As the dairy continued to slump, Pourtales developed a real estate scheme nearly identical to Harvey's ill-fated Fountain Lake suburb. He envisioned Broadmoor City, an elite neighborhood anchored around a large reservoir with a casino and hotel, "a beautiful palace of refined pleasure...in the grand European manner, the likes of which had never been seen in North America." The casino opened in 1891 but failed to attract the guests and the buyers Pourtales imagined. The Prussian nobleman lost his fortune, only to regain it in 1896 in an Arizona gold mine.<sup>46</sup>

And it was gold that would set Colorado Springs apart from not just Pueblo but from the rest of Colorado. Indeed, when it came to the free silver issue, the *Colorado Springs Gazette* was decidedly and unusually neutral, reporting on Harvey, Bryan, and their bimetallist and populist acolytes with remarkable restraint. But in an age when the Denver dailies and, especially, the *Pueblo Chieftain* passionately, breathlessly railed in favor of free silver and bimetallism, neutrality was akin to support for the gold standard. Yet the *Gazette's* position made sense. On one hand, the demonetization of silver unquestionably hurt all of Colorado's economy; any policy that would theoretically improve the dreariness of the two decades since 1873 would be as welcome in Colorado Springs as in any other city in the state.

On the other hand, Colorado Springs flourished despite the silver crisis for two significant reasons. First, as mentioned above, from its founding a significant portion of the city's population was unusually wealthy and much of that wealth came from Eastern and European investments well insulated from the financial crisis devastating the West

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., chap. 8.

and Midwest. Second, in the fall of 1890, Robert Womack, a rancher from the Poverty Gulch area, high on the shoulders of Pikes Peak, brought what he suspected was a gold nugget into the assay office in Colorado Springs. It was indeed gold, and the great Cripple Creek gold rush was born. The scale of production was unprecedented, even by Colorado standards. From \$500,000 of gold dug in 1892, the amount quadrupled to \$2 million a year later. By 1896, \$7.4 million worth of gold passed down the gulches and canyons to Colorado Springs. It topped out at \$18 million in 1900 but, even as late as 1917, still produced \$10 million worth of gold. And nearly all that gold-mined wealth funneled through Colorado Springs. Dozens of newly minted millionaires moved from the mines to the city, where they built mansions and embarked upon a life of Gilded Age leisure and philanthropy. The Colorado Springs Mining Exchange, which facilitated the buying and selling of Cripple Creek mine stock, boomed, exchanging 236 million shares, worth \$34 million, in 1899 alone. Not surprisingly, Cripple Creek also became the locus of labor violence as a wave of desperate silver miners arrived seeking employment, only to meet a wall of residence from gold miners and, especially, gold capitalists.<sup>47</sup>

### **Sanatorium City**

Yet it would be mycobacteria—extremely infectious and often deadly pathogens—that would, more than anything, define Colorado Springs as a site of privileged leisure. Miners would eventually exhaust the gold buried beneath Cripple Creek, but *tubercle bacillus* (TB), known variously as tuberculosis, phthisis, and consumption, infected a third of the world's population and, with no known cure until the

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<sup>47</sup> Ubbelohde, Benson, and Smith, *A Colorado History*, 202, 204–205.

advent of antibiotics, was an infinitely renewable resource. While even the earliest travelers to Colorado Springs suggested that the city would be ideal for consumptives chasing the cure, it was Dr. Samuel Edwin Solly who institutionalized it. He was born in Ireland in 1845 and in 1867 graduated from the Royal College of Surgeons. Dr. Solly contracted tuberculosis at an early age and traveled to the health spas of Europe before Dr. Bell invited him to try Colorado Springs, where he arrived in 1874. The town was an ideal fit, a place where the initials after his name, M.R.C.S. Eng. (Membership of the Royal College of Surgeons, England) and L.S.A. Lond. (Licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries, London), carried considerable weight among the Anglos and anglophiles.<sup>48</sup>

Dr. Solly was among the first wave of wealthy European and Eastern consumptives, who upon reading the proliferation of travel narratives and booster propaganda emerging in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, decided to give the Pikes Peak region a try. And many, if not most, found relief, even those in the terminal stages of the disease. The news spread like wildfire and perpetuated the idea that the very environment of Colorado Springs, especially its mineral water, its pure, thin air, and its abundant sunlight, were nothing short of miraculous. “I am breathing as I never remember breathing before in my life,” wrote Charles McHarg II shortly after arriving in Colorado from Iowa in 1891.<sup>49</sup> The curative powers of the Pikes Peak region even inspired poetry among the consumptives, most notably Ernest Whitney’s 1893 “Colorado Springs,” the first three words of which became the city’s motto:

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<sup>48</sup> “Tuberculosis Fact Sheet No. 104,” *World Health Organization*, October 2014, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs104/en/>; Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies*, 57.

<sup>49</sup> Charles King McHarg II to Selina Storrs McHarg, April 19, 1891, mss. 2100, box 1, folder 12, Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center, History Colorado, Denver.

City of Sunshine! in whose gates of light  
Celestial airs and essences about;  
City of Refuge! from whose sacred height  
Disease falls thwarted as a baffled hound,  
Losing its fang, long burning in the wound;  
City of Life! thou hast a gift of years  
For all; swift Death a thousand times discrowned  
Within thy walls, and Fate, with waiting shears,  
Heed thee, as thou alone of earth didst feed their fears.<sup>50</sup>

Dr. Solly and his Colorado Springs colleagues happily provided an air of scientific authority to patients' claims. Indeed, after the 1882 publication of *The Health Resorts of Colorado Springs and Manitou*, Solly became the preeminent expert on the climatological advantages of Colorado Springs in treating tuberculosis. The Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce frequently reprinted Solly's reports, including "Medical Climatology," "Invalids Suited for Treatment in Colorado Springs," and "The Comparative Merits of Resorts in New Mexico, Colorado and Arizona." A report to the American Climatological Association in 1887 appears scientific and well-reasoned, complete with a dozen tables cataloging everything from mean temperature to comparative velocity of wind.<sup>51</sup> His legendary study of 2,598 "cases of pulmonary phthisis treated at various altitudes" found that seventy-six percent improved at high elevations compared to fifty-nine percent at sea level. Even more remarkable, among "early first stage" sufferers, high-altitude treatment improved symptoms eighty-nine percent of the time. These numbers, along with Solly's climatological data, became

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<sup>50</sup> Ernest Whitney, "Colorado Springs," in *Colorado College Studies: Language Series Nos. 15, 16, 17* (Colorado Springs: Colorado College, 1904), 188.

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Edwin Solly, "An Invalid's Day in Colorado Springs," in *Facts Medical and General Concerning Colorado Springs, Colorado*, ed. George Rex Buckman, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce, 1893), 12–22.

gospel among Colorado Springs boosters.<sup>52</sup> “Every school child can trip off the mean temperature figures and can tell how many hours on an average the sun shines,” observed the *Gazette*.<sup>53</sup>

The promotions worked. Prominent New York City merchant Louis Ehrich chased the cure throughout Europe, only to find it at last in Colorado Springs. His 1887 letter to the *New York Tribune* was subsequently reprinted in newspapers across the United States. “The fact is, that when the glory of this climate becomes known, the exceptional beauty and healthfulness of the city, the remarkable scenery of the surrounding country, the character of its society and educational advantages, and its central location for excursion or travel, many people of wealth, who are not invalid, but who wish to escape the fog, damp, excessive heat and cold of the east, would make this the home of their choice.”<sup>54</sup>

Many were indeed making Colorado Springs “the home of their choice.” *Boston Transcript* correspondent Susan Teele Dunbar, a Colorado Springs educator and librarian, argued in 1883 that in Colorado Springs the “society is the very best: people of culture and refinement, and many possessing much wealth, ‘the cream of eastern society.’”

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<sup>52</sup> J.C. Dana and Carroll E. Edson, “Colorado—About Its Climate,” in *The Colorado Springs Region as a Health Resort: High Altitudes for Invalids*, ed. Charles Fox Gardiner and Gilbert McClurg (Colorado Springs: Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce, 1898), 13.

<sup>53</sup> “‘Cragmor:’ New Sanatorium for Colorado Springs,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, June 29, 1902, 13. There is an interesting irony here that as more and more tuberculosis patients settled in Colorado Springs for its pure, curative air, the air itself actually became more dangerous as this contagious disease could spread via the air. Moreover, physicians advocated that patients expectorate their phlegm regularly, often into paper sputum cups, which were discarded anywhere. Also, the medical waste from sanatoria was a major source of major pollution in Colorado Springs and defiled Austin Bluffs near Cragmor.

<sup>54</sup> Louis R. Ehrich, “Chat with Lung Patients: Eight Year’s Experience in Climate Hunting,” *New-York Daily Tribune*, May 22, 1887, 14.

Dunbar admits that it was the tuberculosis “resorts” that first attracted this class, but many healthy wealthy Easterners followed as well:

Unlike many of the towns and cities in the West, Colorado Springs is not cosmopolitan; it has scarcely any French, German or Irish element. The people are from the older states of the Union, and from Canada, England and Scotland; hence an entirely English speaking community. The people as a whole are probably better educated and possess more wealth than those of an eastern town of the same size. It is more New England-like in the general make up of its social, religious and educational characteristics than any town west of the Mississippi.<sup>55</sup>

Yet despite Colorado Springs’s growing reputation as “Sanatorium city,” it curiously lacked a true sanatorium—a building specifically designed to treat the sufferers of tuberculosis. In answering a hypothetical visitor puzzled by the city’s lack of a formal tuberculosis facility when boosters promoted it as “the greatest sanatorium in the world,” the *Gazette* replied “So it is in so far as nature has done her work. It is only man who has failed.”<sup>56</sup> In the years before Cragmor, “chasers” rented houses or cabins or lodged in hotel rooms or even tents. Still others found rooms among the town’s small, private tuberculosis resorts. But the city’s architectural shortcomings troubled boosters. A group of leading tuberculosis physicians visited the town in June 1902 and, while generally impressed, regretted the lack of a sanatorium. As a Dr. Otis, of Boston, pointed out “he and others will feel more confident about recommending the place” if it had a formal

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<sup>55</sup> Susan Teele (Mrs. Simeon J.) Dunbar, “Colorado Springs and Manitou,” in *The Health Resorts of Colorado Springs and Manitou*, by Samuel Edwin Solly (Colorado Springs, 1883), 29–30.

<sup>56</sup> “‘Cragmor:’ New Sanatorium for Colorado Springs,” 13. Dr. Alexius M. Forster, superintendent of Cragmor, explained the difference between “sanatorium” and “sanitarium” as used at the time: “‘Sanatorium’ is derived from the Latin verb ‘sano—to heal.’ ‘Sanitarium’ is derived from the Latin word ‘sanitas—health.’ Recent usage makes the following distinction between the two words: A sanitarium is a general health resort. For instance, Colorado Springs, Asheville and Saranac would come under this head. A sanatorium is an institution devoted to the particular care and treatment of the sick.” See Alexius M. Forster, “Ask Dr. Forster,” 98.6, January 22, 1925, 8.

facility.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the issue was both medical and commercial. “Then building a great institution where people who have money to pay for attention and care can be treated,” argued the *Gazette*, “that is all there is to the Cragmor sanatorium scheme. It is practical. It is businesslike.”<sup>58</sup>

The “Cragmor sanatorium scheme” was Dr. Solly’s vision for developing Colorado Springs into a world-class tuberculosis resort, with a palatial building designed to take advantage of the city’s climate while providing the latest in medical care. Yet the scheme did not include all sufferers of the disease, which stalked rich and poor alike. Perhaps of his own volition or a need to placate his close friend and the patriarch of Colorado Springs, General Palmer, Dr. Solly wanted to lure westward the rich, blue-blood consumptives and those from the upper middle class. And placate the general he did. In the fall of 1901, Dr. Solly took the aged railroad magnate and industrialist to Austin Bluffs, north of town, and laid out his vision for Cragmor Sanatorium. After a moment, Palmer merely replied, “Tell me, my friend, just how much land and money will you need to build your sanatorium?” Palmer then gave him the 100-acre site and \$50,000 toward construction. The patriarch saw it not just as an act of philanthropy but an investment in the future of Colorado Springs. This was an investment in a promising, new industry. Tellingly, Dr. Solly submitted his early plans for Cragmor not just for the approval of the El Paso County Medical Society but also the Real Estate Exchange, the Merchants Association, and, of course, the all-powerful Mining Exchange.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “How the Doctors Spent Yesterday: Visited the Site of ‘Cragmor’ Sanatorium in the Morning, Dined at the Antlers and then Went to Broadmoor,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, June 30, 1902, 5.

<sup>58</sup> “‘Cragmor:’ New Sanatorium for Colorado Springs,” 13.

<sup>59</sup> “Dr. Solly Submits Cragmor Plan to Sanatorium Committee,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, February 27, 1903, 7.



“Consumption seemed more like a touristic commodity than a disease,” writes Cragmor historian Douglas R. McKay, “...It becomes increasingly apparent that *tubercle bacillus* was the city’s major source of interest and income.”<sup>60</sup>

Attracting “chasers” of the proper class required translating Dr. Solly’s theories of soil, air, and sunshine into a real building, and Colorado Springs architect Thomas MacLaren was the perfect choice for the job. In fact, MacLaren’s story was nearly identical to Dr. Solly’s and to many others among Colorado Springs’s cultural elite. The architect was born in 1863 in Scotland. He attended the Kensington School of Art, in Edinburgh, before arriving at the Royal College of Art, in London. He remained in the city for his apprenticeship and practiced with his brother, architect James MacLaren. In 1882 he became an associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects. But *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* infected the MacLaren brothers; James died of tuberculosis in 1890 and Thomas exhibited symptoms. He first chased the cure in Switzerland before arriving in Denver in 1882. He soon moved to Colorado Springs, where he became the city’s preeminent architect.<sup>61</sup>

MacLaren and Dr. Solly imagined a building and landscape in harmony, all working to free lungs from the shackles of disease. The proposed site, at least in Dr. Solly’s opinion, was perfect. Austin Bluffs, a mile-long plateau of craggy ridges, stark rock formations, and ponderosa pines, emerged from the rolling plains north of Colorado Springs. The soil was porous, dry but not dusty. The bluffs secluded the site from more heavily traveled roads and railroads, and its distance from downtown avoided other

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<sup>60</sup> McKay, *Asylum of the Gilded Pill*, 15–16.

<sup>61</sup> Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, *Thomas MacLaren Biographical Sketch*, November 8, 1999.

impurities. The prevailing winds kept “the air free from dust or smoke [and] blows over it pure from the open country.” The promontory provided breathtaking views of the endless plains to the east and the perpetually snowy crowns of the Front Range to the west. But more than anything, sunlight, the most lauded of all Colorado Springs’s many natural remedies, was plentiful, lingering for long hours from the east, south, and west. “I have seen the sites of many sanatoria, both on this continent and in Europe,” Dr. Solly observed, “but I have yet to see one more beautiful, more wholesome or better fitted by nature with all that goes to make an ideal site or one in a climate its equal for the cure of tuberculosis.”<sup>62</sup>

The combination of the site, Dr. Solly’s theory of “open-air treatment,” and the wealth of patients dictated MacLaren’s design. Cragmor would be a machine of leisured healing, designed to provide the highest possible doses of mountain air and, especially, sunlight to each patient. As originally proposed, the building was a “U” shape, with the wings extending out at sixty-degree angles and the courtyard facing south, thus embracing the course of the sun throughout the day while blocking the prevailing westerly and occasional easterly winds. MacLaren situated all patient rooms on the south-facing sides of the main building and wings. Only ancillary functions faced northward, away from the sun.

But perhaps nothing was as innovative and as influential in the development of both health and leisure resorts as Dr. Solly’s private sleeping porches. “Privacy was for a long time ignored by hospital and sanatorium architects,” observed Dr. Solly’s successor at Cragmor, superintendent Dr. Alexis M. Forster. “...The private sleeping porch

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<sup>62</sup> “‘Cragmor:’ New Sanatorium for Colorado Springs,” 13.

idea...has been copied in other institutions. It has been the keynote of our development since and we are proud of the way it has been worked out in the main building.”<sup>63</sup> The sleeping porches were innovative for two reasons. First they were private, indicating a significant change in the spaces of therapy and leisure. “Individualism is the secret of success in handling tuberculosis,” Dr. Forster declared.<sup>64</sup> Second, the porches became the primary, rather than ancillary, space of healing and ease. Indeed, Dr. Solly and Dr. Forster only permitted patients to use their indoor rooms for dressing and shelter during particularly inclement weather; most of patients’ time was to be spent on the porch. This was an architecture that embraced its environment. As patient Henry B. Young remembered, it sometimes embraced its environment too well: “Dr. Forster led me to believe that God had devised the sleeping porch solely for my recovery. So I gritted my chattering teeth and prayed to Him not to let me die of exposure on His porch before He cured me of consumption.”<sup>65</sup>

What Solly and MacLaren proposed for Cragmor turned Colorado’s architecture inside out and provided a standard for a new vernacular in a way the Mineral Palace never did. For at least two decades, the heavy, brooding, fortress-like architecture of the Victorian era, particularly the late Gothic Revival or early Tudor Revival, Queen Anne, Edwardian, and Romanesque styles, dominated Colorado’s resort architecture. While the styles were often quite whimsical, windows and doors were few; heavily ornamented balustrades and friezes blocked views from verandas. The buildings stood apart from their settings—indeed almost had nothing to do with their surroundings—and represented

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<sup>63</sup> Alexius M. Forster, “My Idea of a Sanatorium,” *The Cragmor News*, July 2, 1924, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> McKay, *Asylum of the Gilded Pill*, 84. It is interesting to note that Young’s use of pronouns conflates Dr. Forster with the omnipotent, which may well have been intentional.

secure shelter from a hostile environment, reminders of a time when exposure to nature was often lethal, not healthful. The styles dominated Colorado resorts ranging from the Brown Palace Hotel, in Denver, to the storied first Antlers Hotel, in Colorado Springs, and Coin Harvey's ill-fated Fountain Lake Hotel, outside of Pueblo. These were also the preferred styles of elite estates, including General Palmer's Glen Eyrie castle and Dr. Bell's Briarhurst manor, in the Colorado Springs area, as well Pueblo's Rosemount and Hillcrest mansions. But with Cragmor the building became subordinate to its site and embraced its surroundings as much as possible. The style of the sanatorium itself was refreshingly simple, alluding to the resorts of the Mediterranean without being overtly Mediterranean, a premonition of the minimalist modernity that would dominate the city later in the century. And the porch suggested a new kind of resort living, of spaces that embraced Colorado's environment while providing comfort and culture. The same, simplified Mediterranean, with ample outdoor space, would define the architecture of leisure in Colorado Springs and beyond, and is perhaps best represented by the 1918 Broadmoor Hotel, successor to Count Pourtales casino and the Grand Dame of the Rockies.



Figure 2.6. Main building of Cragmor Sanatorium, as built in 1914. Douglas R. McKay, *Asylum of the Gilded Pill*.

The success of Cragmor as a vernacular prototype likely stemmed from its association with privileged leisure. Although Dr. Solly died before seeing his dream become reality, his successor, Dr. Forster, similarly afflicted with tuberculosis, continued the campaign and in 1914 opened the main building, which MacLaren had scaled down but retained all of Dr. Solly's innovations (Figure 2.6).<sup>66</sup> The facility attracted exactly the kinds of staff and patients Dr. Solly and Dr. Forster, as well as the Colorado Springs boosters, desired: well-educated, sophisticated, and rich. The physicians were among the best in the world. Dr. Forster came from Yale and Johns Hopkins, was fluent in French, and could quote Shakespeare and Anatole France alike. Born in the Netherlands, Dr. Boissevain graduated from Amsterdam University and the Institute Pasteur, in Brussels.

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<sup>66</sup> Despite being a much more modest building than Dr. Solly had envisioned, the 1914 Cagmor Sanatorium remained innovative and influential. The advising architect for the National Tuberculosis association visited the facility in 1924 and informed the editor of 98.6 "the design of our main building is the most desirable of any in the world, and he advises a similar building wherever possible—the cost being prohibitive in most instances." See L.L. Cragin, "Utopia," 98.6, September 18, 1924, 2.

Dr. Kinsella attended the University of Minnesota and worked with the Mayo Foundation.

Dr. Webb, one of the foremost experts in tuberculosis, was from England, and Dr.

Labarerre was born in Havana, Cuba, and studied in Paris. Many of the residents, both male and female, came from moneyed families and held college degrees. For instance, artist Peggy Taylor graduated from Smith College and chased the cure in Saranac before arriving at Cragmor. Attorney Gardiner Hawkins graduated from Princeton in 1919. And Ethel Bacharach, who proclaimed she was “free, white, and twenty-one,” was born in New York City and attended the Sachs School (now the Dwight School).<sup>67</sup>

The patients at Cragmor specifically and the people of Colorado Springs more generally were quite aware that they constituted an elite class. Even before Cragmor opened, Rev. Dr. Braislin, pastor of the First Baptist Church, championed the sanatorium but cautioned his congregation to remember the city’s poor consumptives. “...Persons afflicted with consumption are made unwelcome,” Braislin preached. “Many of them were...living on the rear of a lot on a back alley, down a cellar or other places, owing to the prejudice against them.”<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the issue of the “indigent tuberculous” was a matter of some worry for patients, physicians, and boosters in Colorado Springs. “They are coming...in increasing numbers, without funds, and are becoming a serious financial and health burden on the various communities to which they migrate,” warned public health statistician Jessamine S. Whitney. She argued these poor consumptives not only lacked the means for their own care but also often arrived with their entire families, thus

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<sup>67</sup> “Who’s Who at Cragmor,” 98.6, August 14, 1924, 4; “Who’s Who at Cragmor,” 98.6, August 28, 1924, 3.

<sup>68</sup> “Dr. Braislin Would Extend Helping Hand to Invalid through Sanatorium Doors,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, March 2, 1903, 5.

multiplying the financial burden on public services and private charities. Moreover, many were foreign born, with the vast majority of immigrants from Mexico.

The problem, Whitney suggested, was that the rhetoric of Colorado Springs's curative climate was too successful, too powerful, too alluring. Poor consumptives flooded the Southwest assuming climate alone would cure them. Thus the solution to the indigent tuberculous problem was "to keep these wanderers from a search which can only result in failure," through literature that would "present the advantages of treatment at home with adequate care, and freedom from worry, as against an attempt at the cure in the South-West without adequate funds." Or, more cynically, perhaps the Southwest, especially Colorado Springs, was reserved as the domain of the "affluent tuberculous."<sup>69</sup>

And as much as the Mineral Palace was a temple of labor, Cragmor was a space of enforced leisure. Here exertion was the enemy, and patients avoided work as a matter of clinical practice. "No form of exercise is good for tuberculosis," Dr. Forster cautioned in no uncertain terms. "Exercise seems to increase the amount of poison absorbed from the tuberculus sore and it also, either directly or indirectly, promotes the growth and extension of the sore. Consequently whether a sore is in the lung or elsewhere rest is always the most valuable and important factor in treatment."<sup>70</sup> Preeminent Colorado Springs historian Marshall Sprague, a Princeton-educated international newspaper correspondent who first came to the city as a Cragmor patient in 1939, equated the enforced leisure of the tuberculosis resort with hard work. "Lots of people have told me

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<sup>69</sup> Jessamine S. Whitney, "Our 'Beloved Vagabonds:' Discussing the Problem of the Indigent Tuberculous," 98.6, April 30, 1925, 1-3.

<sup>70</sup> Alexius M. Forster, "Dr. Forster's Column," 98.6, July 9, 1924, 4.

of feeling completely absorbed in honest toil during those early weeks,” he remembered, “the toil of serenely doing nothing.”<sup>71</sup>

The principle of “serenely doing nothing” applied to the town more generally. As Cripple Creek millionaires flooded Colorado Springs, Dr. Solly worried that the corresponding commercial and, especially, industrial growth would be antithetical, even detrimental, to the effectiveness of tuberculosis resorts and tarnish their reputations. Increased traffic, for instance, would grind the roadways creating more dust, and new homes and businesses inevitably meant more smoke. Colorado Springs, at least in his mind, was a city that should remain at pastoral ease.<sup>72</sup>

### **Inventing Outdoor Recreation**

Even the exercise sanatorium physicians prescribed suggested a strong class bias that shaped Colorado Springs’s built environment. Therapy and recreation extended beyond the porches to embrace all outdoors. “Walking is undoubtedly the best form of exercise,” Dr. Forster opined. “Horseback riding, motoring, and dancing would be excellent and pleasant forms of exercises provided they could be properly controlled.”<sup>73</sup> Thus Cragmor and the other large sanatoria that opened after it developed miles of winding trails, bridle paths, and carriage roads, designed to go no place in particular while delighting patients at every turn.

The development of leisured, naturalistic spaces very much suited General Palmer’s grand vision for Colorado Springs as a city of sprawling parks and wide, tree-

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<sup>71</sup> Marshall Sprague, *The Business of Getting Well* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1943), 3.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas J Kinsella, “Pneumothorax,” 98.6, July 23, 1924, 1; McKay, *Asylum of the Gilded Pill*, 26.

<sup>73</sup> Forster, “Dr. Forster’s Column,” 6.



lined boulevards. In all, Palmer gave over 2,000 acres to the city as parks. He designed and paid for the construction of over eighty miles of roads and carriage drives. In 1901, the general purchased 753 acres of Austin Bluffs; he donated some of the land to Dr. Solly for Cragmor while the remainder became Palmer Park. Even the storied Garden of the Gods, containing the most famous and most traveled carriage drives in Colorado Springs, became a city park, starting at 480 acres and expanding to a whopping 1,367 acres. (By comparison, New York's Central Park is 843 acres.) And unlike many parks in Colorado's other cities, the extensive parks in Colorado Springs embraced existing natural features—rock formations, bluffs, and native trees—rather than creating or forcing an imported, Victorian vision of nature incompatible with the state's arid climate.<sup>74</sup>

Conversely, Pueblo was a landscape of heavy industry, of ceaseless labor, and of dense neighborhoods. While having a significantly larger population at the turn of the twentieth century, Pueblo failed to develop any parks and boulevards on the scale of Colorado Springs. Not that the city lacked a vision of Palmer's caliber. In the winter of 1859–60, the founders of Pueblo laid out a city of grand proportions. The centerpiece was “an extensive park, filled with serpentine drives and sidewalks, fringed with rare shrubbery, and exotic flowers,” writes local historian George A.H. Baxter. “The thick alkali dust of the virgin soil was gently subdued by the spray of a dozen beautiful fountains. This dream on paper was never accomplished in fact.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Fisher, *A Builder of the West*, 304–305.

<sup>75</sup> Baxter, “History of Pueblo City and County,” 3.

Actually the grounds of the Colorado Mineral Palace provided the first large city park in Pueblo. And Mineral Palace Park (Figure 2.7) was spectacular, growing from twenty-seven to over fifty-seven acres. Its elaborate formal flower gardens and varied trees were the vision of horticulturalist William D. Letshaw; Lake Clara, the placid, shady pool perfect for rowboats, was named in honor of Letshaw's wife. But like the Mineral Palace itself, the park was contrived nature, a lush delight only made possible through staggering amounts of irrigated water, with all features planned and manufactured. Pueblo continued this approach when it opened the much larger City Park, in South Pueblo, in 1904. At 157 acres, it was Pueblo's largest park, yet was tiny in comparison to those in Colorado Springs.<sup>76</sup>



Figure 2.7. Mineral Palace Park, 1907. Postcard for the author's collection.

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<sup>76</sup> Remple, "Your Mineral Palace (1937)," 25.

### The Palaces: Legacies

As for the Mineral Palace itself, the victory of pro-gold politics in Washington and the recovery of the economy quickly rendered it as much of a curious relic as Coin Harvey. In the end, the Colorado Mineral Palace Company could not overcome its ever-mounting debt. “In a few years, the Palace was transformed from a great advertising scheme to a museum of old glories.”<sup>77</sup> The company folded in 1896 and sold the building, containing at that time the largest mineral collection in the United States, to the City of Pueblo, for \$10,000. Into the 1920s a meager 18,000 people a year, not even half of the throng that had heralded the palace on its opening day, visited the exhibition, not counting the occasional special events, which became increasingly infrequent.<sup>78</sup>

The building had become a proverbial white elephant. It lacked a heating system, had no formal foundation, and the exterior walls were too flimsy to apply any protective veneer. The roof was an unsolvable problem, requiring ongoing and costly repairs. In 1927, the city spent \$17,000 renovating the building, only to appeal to the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for yet another major renovation a decade later. But by 1939 the WPA’s improvements had already failed, prompting the *Pueblo Star-Journal* to bastardize John Keats: “Mineral Palace—A Thing of Beauty and Problem Forever.” By 1942 the Mineral Palace had become “a fire trap absolutely unusable” and the major symbolic target of wartime scrap drives. Despite a rather vocal minority who wanted to restore the old building, particularly those who remembered it in its heyday, the Mineral Palace’s demolition became a matter of patriotism. A *Chieftain* headline

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 24–25.

declared: “Mineral Palace’s Sentimental Value Won’t Help Whip Japs.” While the city sent some mineral samples to Denver for preservation, most everything else went to Leadville for smelting. Lovely Queen Silver, which the city intended to save, became lost, most likely melted down in the fervor of the scrap drive. King Coal was a hopeless cause, a fantasy of soggy cardboard and rotting papier-mâché.<sup>79</sup>

Cragmor Sanatorium, on the other hand, entered a golden age in the 1920s, as much a fashionable resort of that glittering age as the Broadmoor. Photographs of the sanatorium during the decade express the sumptuousness and glamor of the Hamptons or Newport or Hollywood. With steady income from wealthy patients, Dr. Forester embarked on improvements that expanded the facility and attracted the very best physicians, all while maintaining its luxurious amenities.<sup>80</sup>

But a looming financial crisis and advances in medical technology ultimately doomed Cragmor. After 1929, few patients could afford the lengthy, leisurely stays that made the sanatorium’s opulent trappings and world-class staff possible. At the same time, the evolution of antibiotics and a tuberculosis vaccine both established the folly of sleeping porches and offered much quicker cures. With red ink increasing, Cragmor reorganized in 1936 and, for the first time, opened its doors to poorer patients suffering from ailments other than tuberculosis. “By 1942, old Cragmor had degenerated into a second-rate clinic for sometime-tuberculars,” observed McKay, in a passage suggesting

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 24–27; “Building Thronged by Tourist Groups: Unequaled Collection of Specimens Is Attraction,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, January 1, 1928, sec. C, 3; “Mineral Palace—A Thing of Beauty and a Problem Forever,” *Pueblo Star-Journal and Sunday Chieftain*, February 19, 1939, sec. II, 8; “Group Brands Park ‘Palace’ Real Hazard: Insurance for Workmen Who Donate Wrecking Service Is Needed Now,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, October 2, 1942, 1; “Mineral Palace’s Sentimental Value Won’t Help Whip Japs,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, October 13, 1942, 1.

<sup>80</sup> McKay, *Asylum of the Gilded Pill*, 82.

the lasting power of class rhetoric in Colorado Springs. “It was only half-filled with impoverished local invalids, a handful of distraught Navajo Indians, ten frightened Mexican farmers, some twenty or more syphilitic railroad men, and a dozen miscellaneous lungers—none eager to stay long, all hoping to survive for just one more day.” Following World War II, the Veterans Administration took over Cragmor and used it as an annex for the Fitzsimons Army Hospital, in Aurora, Colorado. But there was a bright spot in the institution’s decline. In 1952, the Cragmor Foundation contracted with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to treat tuberculosis among the Navajo, a job the staff and facility performed with much success through 1960. But the Bureau of Indian affairs ended the program, and with no more patients, the old sanatorium had outlived its usefulness. Nonetheless, unlike the Mineral Palace, Cragmor survived. In 1964, Colorado Governor John Love authorized the University of Colorado to purchase Cragmor. Today this beautiful section of Austin Bluffs is the campus of the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs (Figure 2.8).<sup>81</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The formalization of the Tortilla Curtain was very much founded in the political economy of the nineteenth-century West. The battle between pro-gold and pro-silver, between Eastern capitalists and Western laborers, between elites and populists, played out more distinctly in Colorado than in much of the rest of the country and was nowhere more acute than in differences between Pueblo and Colorado Springs. Pueblo’s Mineral Palace celebrated a Colorado of labor and industry, where natural resources became

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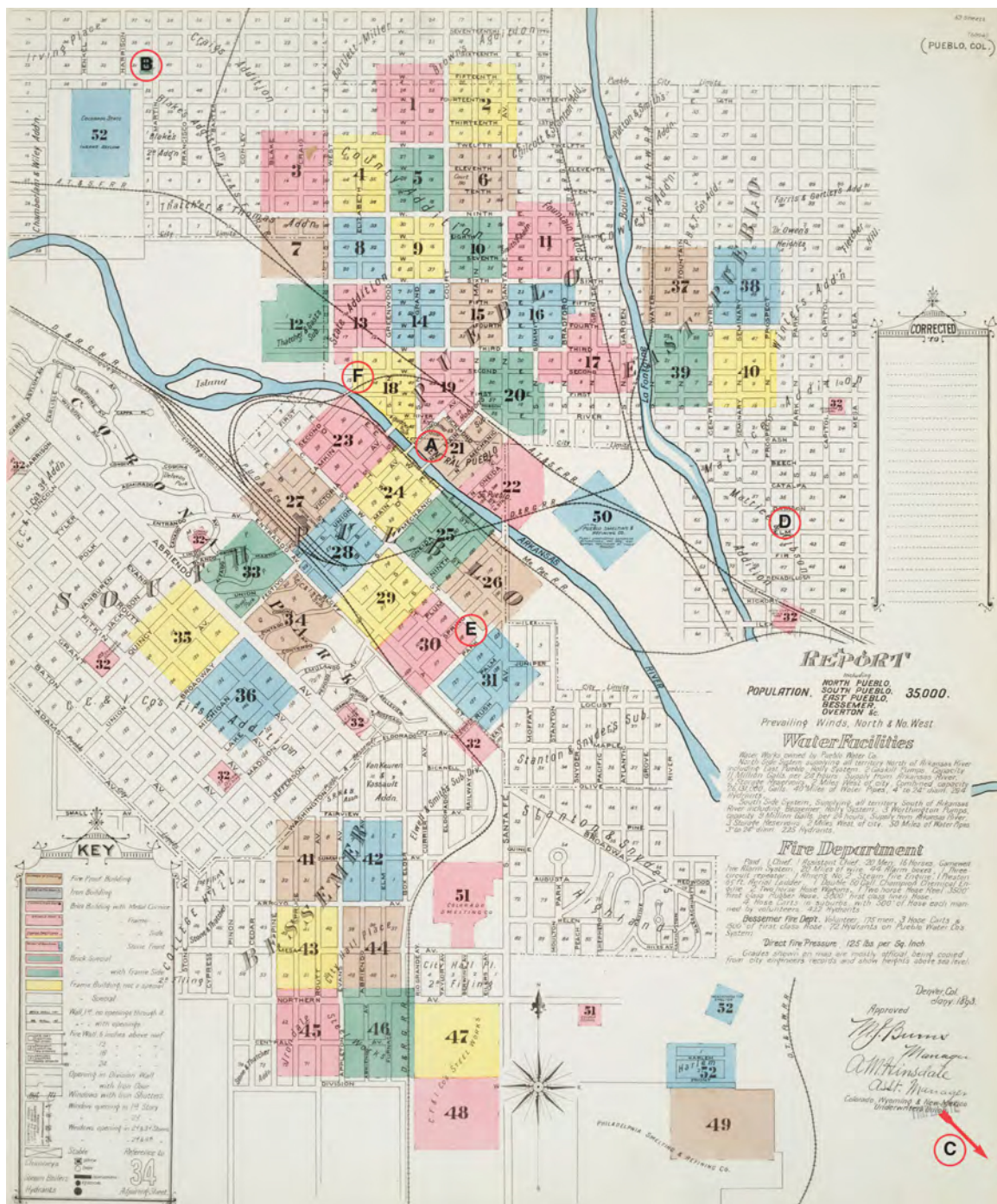
<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 126–129, 135.

consumable products through muscle and mind. Meanwhile, Cragmor Sanatorium sold to the gold-plated elite fresh air, awe-inspiring vistas, and a miraculous cure antithetical to smoke of progress forty miles to the south. Yet as the Mineral Palace declined and Cragmor rose, an explosion of racial violence in Pueblo, culminating in 1919, would harden this division between labor and leisure, broaden the gulf between the Rocky Mountain West and the Southwest, and create a border between white and brown.



Figure 2.8. Cragmor Sanatorium, now Main Hall on the campus of the University of Colorado-Colorado Springs, 2016. Photo by the author.





### CHAPTER 3

#### “THE NEWS FROM PUEBLO IS DISGRACEFUL:” THE LANDSCAPE OF VIOLENCE AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE TORTILLA CURTAIN



Figure 3.1. Pueblo's new City Hall as approached from Grand Avenue, circa 1920. The Vail Hotel, one of the few examples of Beaux Arts architecture in Colorado, is at right. Pueblo City-County Library District.

At Pueblo's new Memorial Hall auditorium Woodrow Wilson's presidency and much of his progressive agenda came to an ignominious end. The President arrived in the city on the afternoon of September 25, 1919, to perform a pair of ideologically linked tasks: to promote the League of Nations and to dedicate the combined City Hall and Memorial Hall (Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2), an immaculately white monument of restrained neoclassicism and a financially responsible expression of the City Beautiful movement. Progressive reformers in Pueblo government, following the lead of Wilson and his ilk, heralded the new City Hall as an enlightened center of transparent, approachable, and professional government, a much-welcomed development after



decades of political corruption, excess, and ineffectiveness. Indeed, young and rising Pueblo architect William Stickney brazenly defied convention by designing the building without a portico, opting instead for a principal entrance that communicated directly to the street in front of it. As President Wilson noted in his dedication speech, "...[T]here is more real assurance to men who are trying to express public sentiment to get into real personal contact with their fellow citizens."<sup>1</sup>

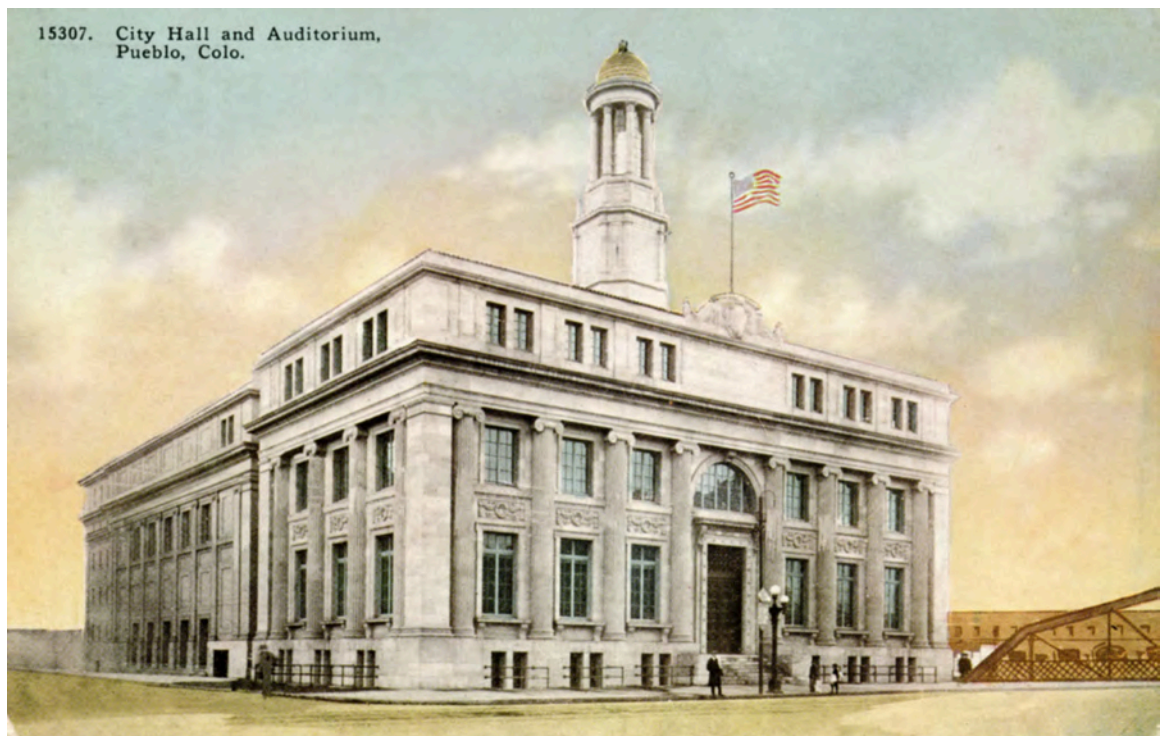


Figure 3.2. Pueblo City Hall, with Memorial Hall attached to its rear elevation, shortly after both buildings opened, circa 1920. The bridge over the historic Arkansas River channel is at right. Postcard from the author's collection.

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<sup>1</sup> "Pueblo's New Auditorium Is Dedicated By Pres. Wilson," *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 26, 1919, 1; "President Wilson's Address On League As Delivered In The City of Pueblo," *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 26, 1919, 1; Gene Smith, *When the Cheering Stopped: The Last Years of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Time Life Books, 1964), 77; Jeffrey DeHerrera, Adam Thomas, and Cheria Yost, "Among the Elites of the Great West:" *Pueblo City Hall and Memorial Hall* (Denver: Historitecture, 2014), 79–80.

Situated at the northern end of Union Avenue, on the north bank of the Arkansas River, the location was powerfully symbolic. City Hall was an early urban renewal project, eliminating several rundown saloons and flophouses that made Union Avenue one of the most notorious streets in Colorado. The building was only a few feet from the site of the original El Pueblo trading post, a place that had hosted European settlers for a century and Native Americans for millennia. As well, the new building stood at the intersection of three historically independent pioneer settlements, Pueblo, South Pueblo, and Central Pueblo, unified in 1886. And the intersection of Union and Grand avenues represented the center of the city's sprawling commercial district, with retail and service businesses to the south and the preeminent financial center of southern Colorado—the product of its exploding mineral, manufacturing, and agricultural wealth—to the north. Most importantly, the very same spot had for decades been the locus of planned and impromptu public celebrations as well as violent demonstrations.<sup>2</sup>

Those same public-minded, progressive leaders christened the 2,291-seat civic auditorium attached to the back of City Hall as Memorial Hall (Figure 3.3), “the official memorial to the men who served their government and Country in the war against Germany.” World War I had cost the area dearly: Pueblo County lost nearly 150 of her young men, and the raging Spanish influenza epidemic continued the misery. Tribute was due. Not only was the auditorium a reminder of sacrifice and valor, but also it represented a new vision of civic life. The space connected political and leisure culture for mass

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<sup>2</sup> “Pueblo’s New Auditorium Is Dedicated By Pres. Wilson,” 1; “President Wilson’s Address On League As Delivered In The City of Pueblo,” 1; Smith, *When the Cheering Stopped: The Last Years of Woodrow Wilson*, 77; DeHerrera, Thomas, and Yost, “*Among the Elites of the Great West*,” *Pueblo City Hall and Memorial Hall*, 79–80.

enlightenment rather than profit—for entertainment the city’s cultural elites deemed valuable, illuminating, and uplifting.<sup>3</sup>

Yet beneath the idealism—a world without war, transparent city government, enlightened entertainment—serious problems remained. Immediately alarming was the President himself who appeared pallid and frail. Wilson was on the final leg of a grueling national tour to promote his vision of the League of Nations, taking his appeal directly to the American people even as the plan floundered in Congress. By the time he arrived in

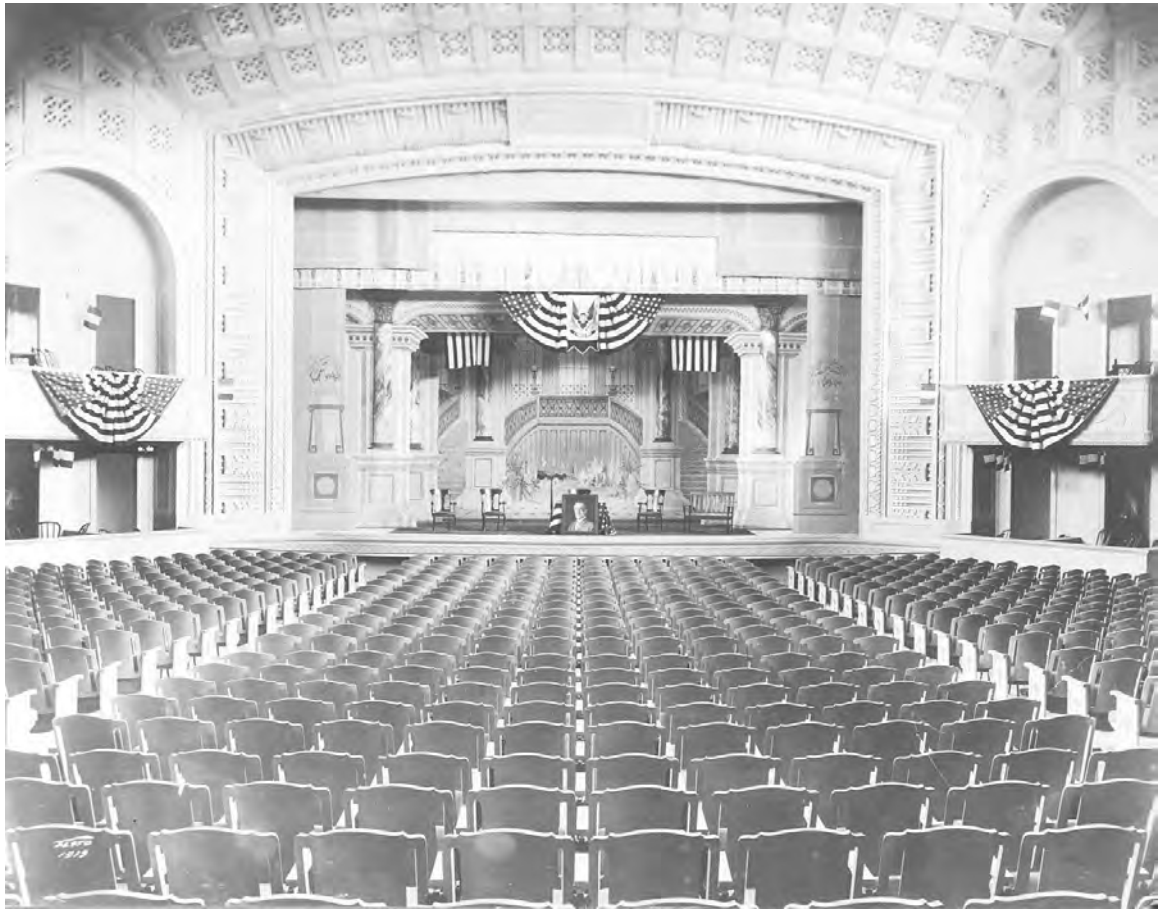


Figure 3.3. Pueblo Memorial Hall auditorium shortly after it opened in 1919. Note the portrait of Woodrow Wilson before the podium. City of Pueblo.

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<sup>3</sup> Farrell G.H. Symons, *Municipal Auditoriums* (Chicago: Public Administration Printing, 1950), 2–3; Claire Martin, “Remembering WWI Casualties,” *Denver Post*, November 11, 2007.

Denver, the President was exhausted. Blaming fatigue, he skipped whistle-stop speeches before thousands gathered at the Colorado Springs railroad depot and the Colorado State Fairgrounds, in Pueblo. After stumbling over the single step into Memorial Hall, Wilson fell into the arms of a quick-acting Secret Service agent. Those who attended the speech described the President as frail, at moments breaking down in tears. Shortly after departing Pueblo on an eastbound train, Wilson's condition worsened substantially. Less than a week later, he suffered a stroke, effectively ending his dream of the League of Nations and his presidency. The Pueblo Memorial Hall dedication was Woodrow Wilson's last public address.

But the biggest problem in Pueblo that day was not a failing President. Instead it lurked in the crowd beyond the stage and in the streets before the glimmering City Hall meant to serve so nobly its citizens. Many Pueblos were out of work as a nationwide strike of steelworkers shuttered the city's biggest industry, the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's massive Minnequa Steelworks. Among Arkansas valley farmers and produce wholesalers, a shortage of refrigerated railroad cars threatened perishable produce shipments at the height of the highly profitable season.

More unsettling, some in the crowd had undoubtedly participated in a shocking display of racial violence that cast Pueblo as the shame of Colorado and incited international condemnation. Only twelve days before President Wilson arrived, a well-armed and well-organized mob hid behind the south wall of Memorial Hall (Figure 3.4) to launch an assault on the adjacent old City Hall jail and capture two Mexican men accused of murdering a white police officer. Helpless or complicit, police stood aside as the crowd rushed the Mexican nationals to the West Fourth Street Bridge, tied ropes

around their necks, and threw them over the side. It was the climax of a violent narrative that had consumed Pueblo and southern Colorado in the early twentieth century. In his Memorial Hall dedication, Wilson proclaimed, “There is one thing that the American people always rise to and extend their hand to, and that is the truth of justice and of liberty and of peace.” Yet in an era of ever-shifting and contested ethnic identities and racial definitions, boundaries, and violence, the mysterious murder of two mixed-race women started a fire that implicated a vast array of races and ethnicities, rose to an inferno with the commutation of a black man’s death sentence, and ultimately resulted in the lynching of two Mexicans. Thus the construction of Pueblo’s grand new City Hall and Memorial Hall, intended to mark the beginning of a new era of justice and reconciliation, instead coincided with some of the worst economic and social, particularly racial, unrest the city—and state—had ever seen.



Figure 3.4. Pueblo Memorial Hall as it appeared at the time of the Gonzales-Ortez lynching. To mob gathered and concealed itself behind this wall. Old City Hall, including the jail, is in the background, barely visible at right. City of Pueblo.

In this chapter, I will investigate the collision of perception and reality that tore apart Colorado at the Tortilla Curtain and resulted in the enforcement—even militarization—of the former labor-leisure boundary. The prevailing paradigm of the state, promoted most heavily by Colorado Springs, was one of a peaceful retreat from the era’s tumult, a sanctuary of white, middle-class leisure. As affluent whites luxuriated at the Broadmoor Hotel or enjoyed the sublime tranquility of the Garden of the Gods, racial and ethnic minorities in southern Colorado sought to express their power and identity in the streets of Pueblo, often very violently. Meanwhile, with the growth of national parks and ski resorts, the state increasingly embraced Colorado Springs’s model of affluent recreation while distancing itself from the bloodshed in Pueblo. As a result, southern Colorado, particularly Pueblo, found itself orphaned, a place that was neither quite Colorado nor quite New Mexico. In other words, the space had become a borderland.

Central to this chapter is an issue at the very heart of the modern American West: the contestation of ethnic and racial identity, particularly as nineteenth-century racialism—the belief that race determined human traits and capabilities—transformed into the racism of the twentieth century. “[R]ace in the West has always been not so much a biological fact as a cultural and historical creation,” observes historian Richard White. “Races are created here out of diverse people who had not before thought of themselves as a single group, and the history of the West is inseparable from their creation.”<sup>4</sup> Because conquered peoples (notably Native Americans and Mexicans) persisted in enclaves far longer in the West than in many other parts of the country and because the federal government consistently regulated race relations in region with

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<sup>4</sup> Richard White, “Race Relations in the American West,” *American Quarterly* 38, no. 3 (1986): 397.

international implications, race relations became distinctive in the West. “This dual international aspect of race relations in the West—both the relationship of the United States with semi-sovereign Indian nations located largely in the West and the international negotiations between the United States and other nations over foreign nationals in the West—sets the West apart from other sections,” White writes.<sup>5</sup> In particular, this chapter looks at the role of violence in urban space and upon an evolving border of difference, the Tortilla Curtain. Persistent violence was the hallmark of this contest for identity and, as White points out, may have helped foster ethnic and racial identities. Pueblo may have indeed become more of a Mexican city simply because its Mexicans had to come together for their own protection, becoming more conspicuous as a result.

In this chapter I will focus almost entirely on Pueblo because Colorado Springs, with its smaller, more homogenous population, lower density of buildings, and lack of heavy industry, never experienced the same level of upheaval. In my examination of newspapers in Colorado Springs I have found none of the lynchings and other racial violence that tore apart Pueblo. This is not to say that the area around Colorado Springs was tranquil. Quite the contrary, the rough-and-tumble mining towns of Cripple Creek and Victor, in the mountains of Teller County immediately west, were rife with violence, as was the adjacent Colorado City and its smelter. Yet while labor unrest and drunken brawls were fairly common, they rarely reflected the deep-seated racial and ethnic animas emanating from Pueblo. Moreover, Pueblo’s violence tended to penetrate the relative

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 404.

peace of Colorado Springs, as peace officers often relocated the victims of threatened lynchings to the El Paso County jail to protect them from Pueblo's lynch mobs.

Violence in southern Colorado helped transform the old labor-leisure boundary between Pueblo and Colorado Springs into a racial border. Critical to the formation of the Tortilla Curtain was the timing of violence in Pueblo. World War I and a lingering, bloody conflict on the U.S.-Mexico border fueled racial suspicions and justified xenophobia, particularly toward people of color, as it provided a context and language for containment and border reinforcement. As that violence increasingly centered on the city's Mexican population, many whites in Colorado and across the United States came to see Pueblo as an extraterritorial Mexican city at the same time as calls for the militarization of the Mexican border and deportation, even criminalization, of Mexican nationals. The Tortilla Curtain of Colorado and the Tortilla Curtain of the U.S.-Mexico border became invariably intertwined, even interchangeable.

I seek to investigate the ways in which space both elicits acts of violence and plays into the meanings of those acts. At work is not just the larger boundary of the Tortilla Curtain but more insidious and no less powerful cultural geography of neighborhoods, streets, and even houses. In Pueblo, the boundaries of ethnic and racial enclaves corresponded closely to city's many industries. Affluent whites tended to reside in areas upwind and upstream from heavily polluting industries and uphill from potential flooding. This situation forced racial and ethnic minorities into heavily polluted sections of the city and those most at risk from frequent flooding on the Arkansas River and Fountain Creek. When minorities transgressed these boundaries, both geographically and culturally, the result was violence. These expressions of power took place in city center,



providing a very public forum for both endorsing and contesting boundaries and definitions while opening the city up to scorn from the rest of the state.

### **The Struggle for Identity: Class Conflict Versus Racial Conflict**

The twentieth century brought to southern Colorado unprecedented violence, particularly associated with the Coalfield War of 1913–14. Relations between miners and management soured significantly after 1903 when John D. Rockefeller Jr. acquired control of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company (CF&I) and its huge coal mining operations south of Pueblo. At the same time CF&I rose to become Colorado's largest employer. Along with the steelworks in Pueblo, the corporation operated iron ore and coal mines, limestone quarries, and coking plants in Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming. Integrated vertically and horizontally, CF&I was notorious for its tight-fisted control over every aspect of its extensive operations, particularly its company towns. In 1913 the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) attempted to organize southern Colorado's coal miners, ordering a strike that, by September 23, had shut down much of CF&I's operations. Miners and families fled company towns for the UMWA's own tent colonies, and skirmishes between strikers and sheriff's deputies, later Colorado National Guardsmen, became more frequent and lethal. It culminated on April 20, 1914, when guardsmen opened fire on the Ludlow camp, a tent settlement of 1,200 striking miners and their families sixty miles south of Pueblo. Twenty-four people died that day, including two women and eleven children who suffocated to death in a pit beneath a tent

guardsmen had set aflame. Historian Thomas Andrews has called the Colorado Coalfield War the “deadliest strike in the history of the United States.”<sup>6</sup>

The Colorado Coalfield War, particularly the Ludlow Massacre, is among the most studied and written about events in Colorado history.<sup>7</sup> Yet while the literature is quite vast, most historians have cast the Coalfield War as a class conflict—a particularly bloody chapter in America’s long-running battle between labor and capital. And the struggle plays out in a largely rural setting. In *Killing for Coal*, Andrews’s environmental history of the Coalfield War, the historian adeptly connects the consumption of southern Colorado’s coal to the state’s subsequent urban development, particularly the rapid expansion of Pueblo and Denver. He channels William Cronon as he labels both cities “Nature’s metropolises.” “[C]oal shaped the character of urban growth by fueling rapid industrial expansion,” Andrews writes, “deepening divisions between rich and poor, and sowing the seeds of conflict.” Yet while Andrews highlights the relationship between rural coal mines and urban development, the violence itself remains a largely rural phenomenon. Pueblo remains silent despite being by far the largest population center in southern Colorado and the very heart of CF&I’s vast industrial empire, with its Minnequa

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas G. Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America’s Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, see Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* (New York: Random House, 1998); Anthony R. DeStefanis, “The Road to Ludlow: Breaking the 1913–14 Southern Colorado Coal Strike,” *Colorado History* 12, no. 2 (September 2012): 341–90; Sybil Downing, *Fire in the Hole* (Niwot, Colo: University Press of Colorado, 1996); Howard M. Gitelman, *Legacy of the Ludlow Massacre: A Chapter in American Industrial Relations* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988); Scott Martelle, *Blood Passion: The Ludlow Massacre and Class War in the American West* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007); George S. McGovern and Leonard F. Guttridge, *The Great Coalfield War* (Niwot, Colo: University Press of Colorado, 1996); Zeese Papanikolas, *Buried Unsung: Louis Tikas and the Ludlow Massacre* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1982); H. Lee Scamehorn, *Mill and Mine: The CF&I in the Twentieth Century* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Upton Sinclair, *King Coal* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1917).

Steelworks and various smelters consuming enormous quantities of coal. Moreover, Pueblo was home to a staggering array of races and ethnicities all closely packed in some of the densest urban neighborhoods in the intermountain West.<sup>8</sup> Yet even during the Great Steel Strike of 1919, contemporary industrial scholars marveled at the lack of violence in Pueblo. “This strike has been on for seven weeks and there has not been a single fist fight yet,” boasted a labor organizer to researchers from the Russell Sage Foundation. “When you remember that only a few years ago...one of the most violent strikes in the history of the country was waged in the southern coal fields, this certainly is a remarkable record.”<sup>9</sup>

So why did Pueblo fail to erupt during the Coalfield Wars and throughout the upheaval of the early twentieth century? The short answer is that the city did, in fact, become more violent, but a subsequent emphasis on conflicts between labor and capital in rural Colorado has obscured the simmering racial violence in Pueblo. As historians have noted, Pueblo merchants were hardly neutral in the conflict, some more than happy to supply firearms to strike organizers. Most infamously, on October 20, 1913, strike leaders acquired dozens of weapons from Holmes Hardware, on Pueblo’s notorious Union Avenue. In later testimony, Holmes reported that the strikers were interested in firearms that would “go through the armor on that automobile” and “pull down those

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<sup>8</sup> Martelle, *Blood Passion*; Andrews, *Killing for Coal*, 58–60.

<sup>9</sup> Ben M. Selekman, *Employes’ Representation in Steel Works: A Study of the Industrial Representation Plan of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company*, Industrial Relations Series (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1924), 190–91. A supporter of John D. Rockefeller’s Industrial Representation Plan, Selekman credits the lack of violence in Pueblo to the plan’s prescriptive meetings between labor leaders and management as well as the “sober and conservative” leadership of Pueblo unions.

searchlights.” Despite these quips, Holmes agreed to the sale and sold more weapons to strikers in subsequent days.<sup>10</sup>

More importantly, murders, and more notably, lynchings increased dramatically in the 1910s. In 1919, one of the darkest years in American history, Pueblo became the deadliest city in the state. That year, Pueblo witnessed twenty-two murders, including two lynchings, and two suicides. Denver, with three times the population, only had only eleven murders, half the number of Pueblo. The summer brought the worst of the violence, with thirteen murders from July 1 to September 15. The victims themselves said much about violence and culture in Pueblo. All of them were working class. Most labored in the steel mill, smelters, or in closely associated factories, or were married to someone who worked in those industries. Fourteen were immigrants, with seven from Mexico, six from Italy, and one from Croatia. Of the natural-born American citizens, five were white and three were black. Four of the victims were women.<sup>11</sup>

Violence in Pueblo did not emerge from an overt conflict between labor and capital but represented a much larger and more profound contest among various races and ethnicities challenging and renegotiating the boundaries of identity and the definitions of American citizenship. At stake were concepts of whiteness which provided access to a broad set of privileges systematically denied to other non-whites. With the progressive era, whiteness became a key attribute of American citizenship. Progressive immigration

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<sup>10</sup> Martelle, *Blood Passion*, 71, 102–3.

<sup>11</sup> “22 Murders in Pueblo in 1919; Two at Hands of Mob,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, January 1, 1920, 14; “Newspapers’ Attack Led to Lynching, Says Shoup; Shot Fired at Policeman,” *Rocky Mountain News*, September 15, 1919, 1. One of the victims included in this list was Aurelio Carrilla, who was technically shot and killed by a Pueblo police officer for resisting arrest. I determined nationality and race by searching each name in Ancestry.com, pulled from manuscript census records, city directories, World War I draft records, and naturalization papers.

law “constructed a white American race,” argues Mae T. Ngai, “in which persons of European descent shared a common whiteness distinct from those deemed not to be white.”<sup>12</sup> In some cases, such as the earlier Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 forbidding Chinese immigrants from becoming citizens, racialized restrictions were explicit. Jim Crow policies and practices were more implicit but still very powerful as they denied African Americans effective participation in citizenship, despite protections guaranteed them under the Fourteenth Amendment. Thus CF&I and its related industries may have provided opportunities for immigrants and migrants in Pueblo but it did little to secure their whiteness and their rights as current or future citizens.

Moreover, this contest for identity played out in very conspicuous urban spaces in downtown Pueblo, specifically the few blocks around the old and new city halls—the nexus of the modern urban center and the ancient Arkansas River that gave it life. Thus, this chapter seeks to contribute to the history of violence in southern Colorado in the early twentieth century by examining it in an urban setting and inserting race into the equation, transforming it into an issue of identity over class. As CF&I’s company towns and the UMWA’s colonies, with their racially and ethnically mixed populations, were essentially miniature Pueblos, the study of violence in the city can contribute to a broader understanding of the Coalfield Wars and much of the period of racial and labor turmoil in Colorado from 1900 through the 1920s.

Of all the violence in Pueblo, none was more associated with racism and expressions of white supremacy than lynchings. In particular, the ritual and spatial dynamics of lynchings in Pueblo revealed the calculus of the racial order in southern

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<sup>12</sup> Mae N. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 25.

Colorado and distinguished it from much of the rest of the state. While vigilante justice ending in a hanging was not unusual in Colorado in the nineteenth century, racially motivated lynchings were a twentieth-century phenomenon that thrived in urban spaces. Mob hangings only occurred when whites accused men of color, specifically men of African or Mexican descent, of crimes against someone else considered white. While violent conflict among and between blacks and Mexicans was frequent, perhaps even common, in Pueblo, those crimes received little attention in the press and rarely garnered criminal proceedings. White-on-white violence was as common, but received more press. Nonetheless white perpetrators fully expected and received due process in their criminal proceedings. But for many of the minority ethnic groups in Pueblo, lynchings provided an opportunity to challenge racial and ethnic identities and the boundaries that contained them. Indeed, even at the height of wartime xenophobia, groups viewed with suspicion could leave their ghettos and claim the downtown streets, even City Hall itself, as their own.

### **“The Crowd had a Purpose and it Carried it Out”**

The legacy of Pueblo’s racial violence in the twentieth century began in 1900 when Calvin Kimblern, identified in newspapers as “a mulatto,” allegedly shot his wife and murdered two white orphan girls. The *Wray Rattler* called it “the most atrocious crime ever committed in her [Pueblo’s] history.”<sup>13</sup> A native of Pittsburgh, Kimblern joined the Twenty-Fifth United States Infantry and served in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War, spending his deployment transporting and guarding prisoners of

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<sup>13</sup> “Colorado Notes,” *Wray Rattler*, May 26, 1900, 2.

war. He left Manila on January 11 and worked odd jobs in Denver and Colorado Springs before becoming a cook at Fries Orphans' Home, a collection of three cramped cottages on the edge of Pueblo's North Side, a largely white, middle- and upper-class neighborhood.

Yet following his return from the Pacific, Kimblern was a changed man and likely suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. His relationship with his wife, Hattie, had become extremely volatile. About three weeks into his employment and following yet another dispute early in the morning of Sunday, May 21, 1900, Kimblern shot his wife in the abdomen. The gunfire awoke some girls sleeping in an adjacent chamber. Their terrified screams only further enraged Kimblern, who fired four shots into the darkened room, striking Ethel Straussen, age thirteen, and Jessie M. Skoggs, age eleven. He then followed his wounded wife, shot her again, but gave up the chase when she ran to a neighbor's house. Kimblern returned to the orphans' home and, upon finding the wounded girls alive, shot and killed them both. He fled on foot northward before climbing into a boxcar full of lumber. Kimblern hid beneath a shipment of boards until he reached Denver, where authorities quickly apprehended him.<sup>14</sup>

Kimblern's hasty extradition to Pueblo late on the evening of May 22 soon evolved into an execution procession as crowds gathered along the railroad to watch the train pass. Ironically, the same tracks that led him to his fleeting moment of freedom

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<sup>14</sup> Some sources suggest Kimblern raped Straussen and Skoggs before killing them, but these accusations do not appear in the Pueblo press or in any Colorado newspaper accounts that I have found. Karen Mitchell, "Fries Orphanage," *Pueblo County, Colorado*, accessed August 13, 2015, <http://www.kmitch.com/Pueblo/orphanfries.html>; "The Murderer Is Still at Large," *Denver Post*, May 21, 1900, 3; "A Lynching in Pueblo: Negro Murderer of Orphans Paid the Death Penalty for His Crimes," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 24, 1900, 2; "Negro Fiend Lynched: Angry Mob Overpowers the Officers and Strings the Victim to a Telegraph," *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, May 24, 1900, 6; "Lynching in Pueblo," *New Age*, May 26, 1900, 1.

returned Kimblern to his inescapable doom. Almost everyone involved, including the prisoner, seemed to realize that as the train steamed further southward, especially after it cross the Tortilla Curtain, any expectation of due process was hopeless. Witnesses described Kimblern's demeanor as quiet and contemplative, as he "puffed vigorously on a cigar...."<sup>15</sup> As the train neared Pueblo in the early hours of May 23, the mobs grew larger and angrier. At Eden, a desolate station in the desert north of Pueblo, a crowd confirmed that Kimblern, who was not protected from view, was aboard the train. They hastened the message to Pueblo. Still half a mile away from the Denver & Rio Grande's Eighth Street station, dense crowds lined both sides of the track. As soon as the train stopped, Pueblo County Sheriff Beaman and Pueblo City Police Chief Griffith removed their prisoner from the train opposite the station platform. But a mob met them there; the officers handed over Kimblern without resistance. To avoid any further violence, the officers had already removed the bullets from their service pistols. "Only by using force could we have made any progress whatever, and to have saved the prisoner would have without doubt meant the sacrifice of a good many better lives," Beaman later admitted. "The crowd had a purpose and it carried it out."<sup>16</sup>

Kimblern's last moments were brutal and dark, providing a precedent for the attempted and successful lynchings that followed it, particularly establishing the central business district as the appropriate venue for execution. A crowd of between 1,500 and 3,000 people (some reports range from 6,000 and 10,000 people) hustled Kimblern some fifty feet before tying a rope around his neck. They then dragged him over the railroad tracks and down Eighth Street "at a brisk run" to the Grand Hotel (Figure 3.5), then the

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<sup>15</sup> "A Lynching in Pueblo: Negro Murderer of Orphans Paid the Death Penalty for His Crimes," 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



city's largest and most elegant hostelry, where the crowd had already prepared the highest telegraph pole in the business district for Kimblern's hanging. Not only was the corner one of the busiest intersections in town, but also it boasted one of the city's few, recently installed electric arc lamps, providing an ideal theatrical setting for the macabre performance. Despite the hour, sometime after one o'clock in the morning, "The hotel was alive with people," the *Colorado Springs Gazette* reported. "They were at the windows and in the trees, on the house tops and on the street." The black press noted the large number of "well-dressed women" in the mob. Then, with the rope thrown over an arm of the telegraph pole, the crowd heaved; the rope broke after lifting Kimblern about five feet, and "he dropped back to the sidewalk a lifeless heap." Some witnesses argued that due to the trauma of dragging him from the train to the Grand Hotel, Kimblern was already unconscious, perhaps even dead, before he ever arrived at the telegraph pole. Regardless, the mob mended the rope and lifted the man about a foot off the ground, allowing the throng to claw at him and tear off his clothes, distributing the shreds as souvenirs. Then they hoisted the body higher, where it remained until daybreak. Half of his face had been torn from his skull; the other side had been smashed by a sledgehammer. The *Gazette's* account closed with a sobering observation: "When lynched, Kimblern was still wearing his old army blouse, little of which was left by the members of the mob."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.; "Negro Fiend Lynched: Angry Mob Overpowers the Officers and Strings the Victim to a Telegraph," 6; "Lynching in Pueblo," 1.

The event reinforced racial boundaries, making clear who could and could not enjoy the benefits of American citizenship, while also suggesting some fluidity in those boundaries. While military service may have been among the highest expressions of citizenship, it failed to provide Kimblern with even the basic right to due process. As with most lynchings, the mob violence was as much a demonstration of white supremacy as it was vigilante retribution. On the one hand, Ethel Straussen and Jessie Skoggs were among the most anonymous members of the city's large population of poor eastern European immigrants, a population the city's affluent whites either overlooked or actively disdained. Indeed, living conditions at Fries orphanage were appallingly dismal and had been for most of its existence. Yet with their deaths at the hands of a black man, the girls' whiteness trumped their lack of Americaness. Following the murders, Rev. A.A.



Figure 3.5. Pueblo's Grand Hotel, circa 1900. A mob lynched Calvin Kimblern on this corner in 1900. Postcard from the author's collection.

Fries fled Pueblo in shame as accounts of abuse and neglect at his orphanage mounted. Yet to the *Chieftain* and presumably white Puebloans, Fries's biggest crime was employing a black man whom he also allowed to live adjacent to white girls, the true measure of minister's "incompetency and criminal neglect." On the other hand, Kimblern, despite his natural-born citizenship, could not cross the boundary of whiteness. He had infringed on the racial order, which prompted many commentators to connect the act of lynching quite directly to racial violence and acts of white supremacy. "Pueblo came to the front in good shape last Tuesday," congratulated the *Greeley Sun*, "and avenged horrible murder in true southern style."<sup>18</sup>

Yet the lynching of Calvin Kimblern did not pass without some deep soul searching. While nearly all Colorado newspaper editors lamented the violence in Pueblo, most did not expressly condemn it. Indeed, many sought justification for the mob's actions. In a situation eerily similar to the Gonzalez-Ortez lynching nineteen years later, quite a few Colorado newspaper editors attributed the Kimblern hanging directly to the state's recent repeal of capital punishment. The line of thought may have originated with the *Denver Post*, which began its account of the event, "Calvin Kimblern paid the penalty for his brutal murders last night by death inflicted upon him by [the] people of Pueblo, administering that vengeance which the law no longer imposes upon murderers in Colorado."<sup>19</sup> A Confederate army veteran and capital punishment proponent, Governor Charles S. Thomas, unsurprisingly sided with the Pueblo mob, arguing, "The lynching was a natural outburst of indignation of the people of Pueblo." "Human sense of justice

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<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, "Fries Orphanage"; "Capital Punishment," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 29, 1900, 4.

<sup>19</sup> "Negro Murderer Lynched by Mob of Pueblo Citizens," *Denver Post*, May 23, 1900, 7.

rebels at such a state of affairs,” noted the editor of the *Greeley Sun*, “and causes people to take the matter out of the courts and execute a sentence without a law....” The *Cañon City Clipper* concurred, adding, “While lynchings are regrettable they seem necessary under our present law.” Other editors endorsed the same reasoning but took the tact of condoning the act while censuring the actors. “The punishment was not greater than the crime, but it is to be regretted that the crowds did not do their work with more soberness,” lamented the *Aspen Tribune*. “The execution of a man should not be accompanied by howls of delight. He got more than his deserts, it is true, but the action of the infuriated mob had more of rage and thirst for blood than it did for justice.”<sup>20</sup>

But opinion in Colorado was hardly monolithic. Indeed, newspapers in Boulder and Colorado Springs, cities notable in the state for their institutions of higher learning and unusually affluent, highly educated, and nearly all-white populations, condemned the violence in Pueblo, unabashedly labeling the lynching as murder. As the *Boulder Herald* observed, “It is questioned if the mob at Pueblo would have murdered Kimblern even if there had been a law for hanging on the statute books.” The *Boulder Camera* scolded “The fact that...our great journals refrain from censure, while reporting minutely the nasty and brutal details of the lynching, tells against us as a community and shows that what is needed is a higher respect for law rather than a change in any specific law.”<sup>21</sup> And the *Colorado Springs Gazette* printed a lengthy condemnation from what appears to have been an African American writer signing powerfully as “A Citizen.” The letter is

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<sup>20</sup> “Capital Punishment,” 4; Stephen J. Leonard, *Lynching in Colorado, 1859–1919* (Boulder, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 146–47.

<sup>21</sup> The *Boulder Daily Camera* was not always so magnanimous. It applauded the lynching of another black army veteran, Washington H. Wallace, in La Junta nearly two years later, adding “There seems to be a brutal strain in the negro blood which civilization cannot refine.” See Leonard, *Lynching in Colorado*, 147.

remarkable because it both ties racism to the violence and notes the profundity of lynching a man in the central business district:

Every respectable negro in this state unreservedly condemns the foul crimes charged to the negro Calvin Kimblern, who was officially murdered in Pueblo yesterday. Black as were the crimes he committed, they are virtue itself compared with the acts of the officers of the law who manacled the wretch with irons and then turned him over to the tender mercies of ten thousand cowardly ruffians to be strung up to a post on one of the main thoroughfares.... Take my word for it, every hand that grasped the rope which choked out the worthless life of Calvin Kimblern was a coward's hand....<sup>22</sup>

While the violence continued, many more Coloradoans began to speak out against it. Five months after the Kimblern murder, a mob lynched John Porter, a young black man, in Limon, on the far eastern plains. The event incited a furious outcry in Denver. The YMCA organized a huge, ecumenical gathering at First Baptist Church. It featured Colorado's most respected religious and political leaders who each condemned Porter's alleged crime—the murder of a young, white girl—while denouncing in no uncertain terms mob violence. “The point at issue is shall passion or reason control our people?” Rabbi William Sterne Friedman asked. “...The object of society is not revenge. The law is supposed to be the arbiter.”<sup>23</sup>

Despite condemnation from Denver, the threat of lynchings continued unabated in Pueblo, laying bare the city's worsening race relations, the turmoil among its various ethnicities, and its staggering economic and environmental inequities. The intended victim of the next attempted lynching was another black man, William “Willy” Lawrence. He was born in Alabama in 1868, and between 1893 and 1899 he followed his brothers

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<sup>22</sup> A Citizen, “Open Parliament: The Crimes at Pueblo,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 26, 1900, 4.

<sup>23</sup> “Lynching Denounced,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, November 19, 1900, 1.

Green, Lewis (or Louis), and John to Pueblo, where he worked a series of odd jobs at the various smelters and the steelworks. Lawrence and his brothers may have been part of a larger migration of African Americans from Alabama; the steelworks preferred migrants from the Birmingham area as unskilled and semiskilled laborers because of their familiarity with the industry. While Lawrence's criminal record was far from clean, he was generally an unremarkable and well-liked resident, counting sheriff's deputies among his friends. Moreover, he had just started a promising new job at the United States Zinc Company's recently opened smelter at Blende, located at the eastern edge of Pueblo and along the Arkansas River.<sup>24</sup>

To be closer to his new employer, Lawrence moved into a tiny, one-room shanty in Salt Creek, a traditionally Mexican enclave beyond the city limits and the prying eyes of white authorities in Pueblo. Like Old Mexico, or Goat Hill (Figure 3.6), Salt Creek was a squatters' settlement, a desperate landscape of often-desperate people. Its winding, narrow, organic streets stood in stark contrast to the rigid grid of broad thoroughfares that defined Pueblo and much of the urban West. Accompanying the tiny one- and two-room adobe and wood-framed shacks were an assortment of outbuildings and accessories ranging from privies to *hornos*, or outdoor ovens. Instead of the green yards and shady trees common in the heavily irrigated Anglo neighborhoods, Salt Creek was relatively treeless, with yards swept clean until the earth was as hard as stone.

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<sup>24</sup> Blende is another name for sphalerite or zinc sulfide.



Figure 3.6. Pueblo's Goat Hill neighborhood. Also referred to as Old Town and Old Mexico, the neighborhood was typical of the city's poor ethnic enclaves. The cupola of the old city hall is at the horizon, near the center. (Denver Public Library Western History Collection.)

And like Goat Hill, Salt Creek was among the most polluted places in Colorado. Situated immediately east of and downwind from the steelworks, toxic, red dust from the blast furnaces rained down regularly upon the settlement. The pollution then seeped into ground water, befouling the few wells in the area. Flanking the western bank of Salt Creek itself were towering, smoldering, slag heaps, and the zinc smelter, just north of the

settlement, continued the legacy of toxicity. Yet for many it was the only affordable alternative to living in the steel boomtown.<sup>25</sup>

By many accounts Salt Creek was as lawless as it was polluted. Pueblo's newspapers portrayed the village as crime-ridden and violent, preying on perceptions of Mexicans and adobe architecture from the nineteenth century, as seen in chapter one. For instance, on the evening of August 27, 1917, Pueblo County Sheriff's deputies raided "a Mexican hut,...the adobe of eight Mexicans," after receiving complaints of "brawling in the habit of the Mexican men," shortly after midnight on the same day. Police found evidence of a struggle, including blood-soaked sheets, and laid in wait for the building's occupants to return, arresting all eight of them. Yet police never found a victim. Not only was Salt Creek itself relatively lawless, traveling there from Pueblo often meant crossing through some of Pueblo's most dangerous neighborhoods, including the notorious lower East Side. Indeed, upon moving to Salt Creek, Lawrence acquired a thirty-eight-caliber Harrington & Richardson revolver for his protection, the very same weapon that would change his life.<sup>26</sup>

And it was to Salt Creek, two miles by foot from downtown, that Willie Lawrence wished to return when his temper and his new handgun landed him in hot water.

Lawrence spent the afternoon and early evening of Saturday, October 11, 1902, among his friends Lee Tyler and William Guy, both black and both Pueblo County Sheriff's

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<sup>25</sup> Joanne West Dodds, *Pueblo: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Va.: Donning Company, 1982), 110; "Says Goldstein Had Heavy Poker," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, October 13, 1902, 3; *City of Pueblo Annual Directory for the Year 1893* (Pueblo, Colo.: Chieftain Publishing Co., 1893), 316; *R.L. Polk & Co.'s Pueblo City Directory, 1899-1900* (Pueblo, Colo.: R.L. Polk & Co., 1899), 507-8.

<sup>26</sup> "Blood Stains May Be Evidence of Murder," *Pueblo Chieftain*, August 28, 1917, 1. The article clearly states "adobe," not "abode."



deputies. Around eight o'clock, Lawrence decided to buy some tobacco at a nearby saloon before starting out for home. He met up with John Trujillo, a Mexican and fellow Salt Creek resident, and entered Levin's Chicago Liquor, where Lawrence had once been employed. Located on the corner of Main and First streets, Levin's Chicago Liquor was situated at the heart of Pueblo's business district, one of no fewer than eight saloons within and surrounding the small triangle formed by Main Street and Union Avenue, not counting billiards halls and an Anheuser-Busch beer bottling plant.<sup>27</sup> The saloon's owner, Hyman Levin, was a Jew born in Poland. He first settled in Chicago before coming to Pueblo. From Chicago he brought with him his bartender, a fellow Jew and Polish immigrant named Harry Goldstein. Lawrence, with Trujillo, approached the bar and asked Goldstein for tobacco, which cost ten cents. Lawrence claims to have handed Goldstein a quarter and demanded back his fifteen cents in change. Goldstein refused, insisting that Lawrence had not yet paid him. As Lawrence and Trujillo continued the argument, the clamor roused Levin from his office. Lawrence then punched Levin in the face, dropping the bar owner to the floor, and rushed toward the back door. At that point, Goldstein came around the bar to protect his employer. Lawrence claimed that Goldstein carried a "big poker," but witnesses reported that the bartender was unarmed. Regardless, Lawrence drew his revolver and fired twice, killing Goldstein. Lawrence then turned and ran out the back door into the alley, where the Pueblo police chief and two other officers happen to be standing. They immediately restrained and arrested Lawrence.

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<sup>27</sup> Sanborn Map Company, "Pueblo, Colorado, 1904" (Sanborn Map Company, 1903), 4–5.



Figure 3.7. Pueblo's much-derided 1889 City Hall during the 1894 Arkansas River flood. Pueblo City-County Library District.

The officers initially took Lawrence to the jail in Pueblo's notoriously dilapidated city hall (Figure 3.7). Built in 1889 following the consolidation of the three Pueblos, the modest, brooding Second Empire-style building was, from the day it opened, too small for city government. Because of poor materials and shoddy construction, it quickly deteriorated. As word of the shooting spread and drunken Saturday-night revelers turned into an "enormous mob," officers feared that the ramshackle building could not repel the crowd, estimated at over 2,000 people. In response, Pueblo police moved Lawrence to the somewhat more substantial Pueblo County Jail. Located on southwest corner of Martin and West Sixteenth streets, the jail was situated on the far northwestern edge of the city, adjacent to the campus of the Colorado State Insane Asylum. While the city jail appeared weak, the county jail rose as fortress from the barren scrubland. Despite its rather nondescript exterior, the jail boasted one of the most unusual designs in this history of American incarceration. It was a rotary jail, containing a two-story cylinder of cells that

could be rotated by a crank to a single door, thus highly restricting access into and out of the cells. Yet despite its formidable appearance and modern interior, the Pueblo County Jail consisted of twelve-inch-thick adobe blocks behind a thin, pressed-brick veneer.<sup>28</sup>

In the meantime, a group of 200 or so emerged from downtown and marched through the city's affluent North Side toward the county jail "with ropes, determined to force an entrance if possible and hang the negro." Realizing the danger, Lawrence's friends, deputies Tyler and Guy, removed him from the county jail and started back toward the city jail, nearly running into the mob. Pueblo Detective Wheeler Day then rushed Lawrence into the cab of a northbound railroad locomotive as the crowd, meanwhile, reached the county jail. Fearing the destruction of property, officials allowed the mob to search the cells, which they did—twice.

Yet Lawrence made it to the safety over what would become the Tortilla Curtain. The El Paso County Jail, in Colorado Springs, was a far different environment than the cramped and deteriorated Pueblo City Jail, in its dense urban setting, or even the stark Pueblo County Jail, situated on an arid, treeless bluff. The El Paso County Jail was a large, graceful Romanesque building in a park (Figure 3.8). Indeed, its location, directly across the street from the picturesque El Paso County Courthouse, itself surrounded by Alamo Park, was downright pastoral.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "Says Goldstein Had Heavy Poker," 3; DeHerrera, Thomas, and Yost, *"Among the Elites of the Great West: " Pueblo City Hall and Memorial Hall*, 28; Sanborn Map Company, "Pueblo, Colorado, 1904," 54.

<sup>29</sup> "El Paso Co. Jail, Colorado Springs, Colo.," *Denver Public Library Digital Collection*, accessed August 14, 2015, <http://cdm16079.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/16210/rec/2>.

Once safely in Colorado Springs, the black man who cheated Judge Lynch in Pueblo immediately piqued the curiosity of one of the state's leading citizens and pioneering progressives, Isaac Newtown "Ike" Stevens, editor of the *Colorado Springs Gazette*. Stevens enjoyed the benefits of his racial identity as a white man in a way Lawrence could only imagine—an ability to rise from nothing to great prominence. He was born on November 1, 1853, on a farm near Newark, Ohio, and, despite the early loss of his father and ensuing poverty, became a schoolteacher in Illinois before studying law at Burlington, Iowa. Stevens arrived in Denver on June 1, 1880, and immediately hung out his shingle. But his political ambitions rose above his private practice; in 1884 President Chester A. Arthur appointed Stevens assistant United States district attorney.



Figure 3.8. The pastoral setting of the El Paso County Jail, in Colorado Springs, circa 1906–1910, was dramatically different from the urban environs of Pueblo's jails. Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, P-1874.

Four years later he was elected district attorney for the Denver judicial district. A gifted orator and writer, Stevens longed for a bigger platform for his ideas. In 1899 he purchased the *Colorado Springs Gazette* and named himself editor. He was an early and vocal activist in the women's suffrage movement, championing the cause across the United States and especially in Colorado, which, in 1893, became the second state to enfranchise women.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Stevens almost single-handedly changed the economy and culture of Colorado. He, along with Earl B. Coe, introduced the sugar beet to the state, transforming its labor-intensive cultivation and heavy industrial production into Colorado's new "white gold." The sugar beet industry became Colorado's unchallenged corporate titan as it brought thousands of Germans from Russia, and later Mexicans, to toil in the sugar beet fields and refineries of northeastern Colorado and the Arkansas Valley. And unlike Lawrence and the residents of Salt Creek, who dwelt in adobe shacks at the foot of smoldering slag heaps, Stevens lived in a suite of rooms at the opulent Antlers Hotel, with its sprawling verandas overlooking Colorado's most iconic vista: Pikes Peak framed between Cheyenne Mountain and the Rampart Range.<sup>31</sup>

Through activists in Colorado Springs like Stevens, victims of threatened lynchings found not only safety but also sympathy. The editor arrived at the jail the

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<sup>30</sup> "Says Goldstein Had Heavy Poker," 3; Colin Selph, "The Colorado Commission to the World's Fair," *World's Fair Bulletin*, July 1902, 19. Stevens publish three "political novels:" *The Liberators: A Story of Future American Politics* (1908), *An American Suffragette* (1911), and *What is Love?* (1918).

<sup>31</sup> "Says Goldstein Had Heavy Poker"; Selph, "The Colorado Commission to the World's Fair," 19; Alice Polk Hill, "Isaac Newton Stevens," in *Colorado Pioneers in Picture and Story* (Denver: Brock-Haffner Press, 1915), 502–4; *The Giles City Directory of Colorado Springs, Colorado City, and Manitou* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Giles Directory Company, 1902), 408; "1920 United States Federal Census, s.v. 'Mary Mehle' Pueblo, Pueblo County, Colorado," Ancestry.com, accessed June 3, 2015. Genealogical data for William Lawrence determined through a corroboration of his known siblings in Pueblo from 1899 to 1903: Green W. Lawrence, Jr., John Lawrence, and Lewis (or Louis) Lawrence.

morning after Lawrence's attempted lynching and found him "stretching his six feet of brawn and muscle out upon the swinging cot" while smoking a pipe and reading the *Gazette*. The editor described Lawrence as "a cool and collected man" who was "a trifle darker than a mulatto." What brought their worlds together that day was an emerging landscape of violence that threatened to obliterate the border of labor and leisure, fundamentally changing the relationship of the two cities, something Stevens understood. "William Lawrence is a negro who was brought here early yesterday morning from Pueblo because the officers at that place believed his neck was in danger. He shot and killed Harry Goldstein, a white bartender, and a mob clamored for his blood, in return."<sup>32</sup> While the Pueblo newspapers continued to vilify Lawrence, Stevens allowed the prisoner to tell his side of the story, a tale of injustice and self-defense. More unusually, Stevens did not rebut any of Lawrence's assertions. "It's mighty easy to get into trouble like this," Lawrence lamented to the newspaper editor. "I had no idea of getting into anything at all—I didn't want to kill anybody." In the editor's sympathy was a subtle criticism of Pueblo that became much more hardened by 1919. "He will remain here [in Colorado Springs] until the Puebloans settle down," Stevens wrote. "The Pueblo papers state that Lawrence is regarded there as a bad man and safe only in jail."<sup>33</sup>

Despite Stevens's sympathy, a jury convicted Lawrence of voluntary manslaughter, and the judge sentenced him to seven to eight years in the Colorado State Penitentiary, in Cañon City. For his part, Stevens, bolstered by his meeting with Lawrence, continued his anti-lynching crusade. While his stance on race and racism never evolved to the level of his support for women's voting rights, he nonetheless

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<sup>32</sup> "Says Goldstein Had Heavy Poker," 3.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

remained convinced of the right to due process regardless of race. Moreover, the *Colorado Springs Gazette* continued to rail against lynching, labeling its practitioners in southern Colorado as criminals. In August 1902, the paper quoted extensively from an anti-lynching *Atlantic* article by Andrew Sledd: “The white man who wrongs a black and the white mob that lynches a negro have by that act and to that extent become criminals in the eyes of the law,—and should be dealt with unsparingly as such.”<sup>34</sup>

As with the Kimblern lynching, the attempted hanging of William Lawrence laid bare the fluidity of racial and ethnic identities in Pueblo. Newspaper accounts refer to Lawrence only as “negro” or “mulatto.” His racial identity was immutable. Harry Goldstein, on the other hand, while called “Jew” or “Hebrew” was, at the same time, consistently described as white. Jews, particularly those from southern and eastern Europe, were not necessarily considered white in the United States from the late nineteenth century until after World War II. In fact, as the groundwork of scientific racism coalesced into eugenics and found popularity among elite, white progressives, anti-Semitism found a pseudo-scientific justification, reaching its pinnacle with the publication of Madison Grant’s *Passing of the Great Race*, in 1916. “...there were three or four major European races ranging from the superior Nordics of northwestern Europe to the inferior southern and eastern races of Alpines, Mediterraneans, and, worst of all, Jews...,” observes Karen Brodtkin Sacks about Grant’s racial hierarchy. Yet when it came

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<sup>34</sup> “A Shooting in Pueblo,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, October 12, 1902, 8; “Says Goldstein Had Heavy Poker,” 3; “Feeling Still Running High Against Lawrence,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, October 14, 1902, 5; “Lawrence Sentenced,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, December 24, 1902, 7; “The Cure for Lynching,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, August 3, 1902, 32.

to providing a justification for hanging a man of color, a Jew in Pueblo in 1902 could become white.<sup>35</sup>

Another incident four years later further highlighted the ethnic and racial divisions in the city—both culturally and spatially—and the consequences of violating those boundaries. Shortly after midnight, on May 14, 1908, James Lynn, a twenty-two-year-old black masonry laborer, allegedly forced open the back door of the home of widow Julia James, “a well-respected white woman,” and began beating her. Her sixteen-year-old daughter, Sarah, tried to intervene when Lynn pulled out a gun and fired it. The women ran into the street, where Lynn gunned them down, wounding Julia and killing Sarah. Poses formed quickly and fanned out all over the Pueblo and southern Colorado, accosting every black man they encountered and openly threatening to lynch Lynn when they captured him. In Pueblo, deputies shot two black hoboes running from a Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific train, suspecting them of being involved with the crime; they were not. The same day, two Pueblo County Sheriff’s deputies raced northward to Fountain, in El Paso County, after receiving reports of a black man walking along the railroad tracks toward Colorado Springs. He was detained but, again, was not the suspect.<sup>36</sup>

Following the incident, stories emerged that said as much about the spatial arrangement of Pueblo as they did about its social and cultural norms. While ethnic enclaves like Salt Creek or Goat Hill existed, many of the poorer neighborhoods were mixed racially and ethnically, none more so than the Lower East Side. Here on River

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<sup>35</sup> Karen Brodtkin Sacks, “How Did Jews Become White Folks?,” in *Race*, ed. Steven Gregory and Roger Sanjek (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 79–81.

<sup>36</sup> “Negro Slays Girl, Fatally Shoots Mother,” *Rocky Mountain News*, May 14, 1908, 2; “Stop Negroes with Shots,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 15, 1908, 5; “News of the Local Courts,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 15, 1908, 6.



Street, the James family and Lynn lived side-by-side with neighbors that included recently arrived Mexicans and orthodox Jews from eastern Europe. While the neighborhood nominally continued the grid of streets from the rest of the city, it hosted the same assortment of adobe and wood-frame shacks as Salt Creek and Goat Hill. More notably, the street hosted several tent houses, some with wood sides and canvas roofs and others consisting only of a canvas enclosure on a wood platform. Trees were few, and grass yards did not exist. Moreover, the lots were half the size of those in the rest of the East Side, leaving only a few feet between walls.<sup>37</sup>

It was this proximity and racial heterogeneity that allowed a damning narrative of the story to evolve. Lynn's wife reported that her husband began "acting strangely" toward his own family and visited the Jameses frequently following the death of Julia's husband in September. In the days after the murder, witnesses came forward claiming that Lynn was "infatuated" with Sarah James (some reports suggested it was Julia James) and became increasingly jealous of the family's frequent visitors, particularly Sarah's suitor Joe O'Neil. "Lynn was known to spy on the house," noted the *Denver Post*, "and many persons say they have seen him peeping through the windows at night." After she recovered, Julia recounted that Sarah had dreamt that Lynn killed her. The next morning, Sarah begged her mother to move from the neighborhood.<sup>38</sup>

But when authorities eventually caught up with Lynn on May 16, in Limon, what appeared to be a rather clear-cut case began to unravel. Officers seized Lynn's weapon and hoped to match it to the bullets that wounded Julia and killed Sarah. To their surprise

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<sup>37</sup> Sanborn Map Company, "Pueblo, Colorado, 1904," 67–69.

<sup>38</sup> "Negro's Jealousy Caused Murder," *Denver Post*, May 15, 1908, 7; "Lynn Must Die, Is Verdict in 14 Minutes," *Rocky Mountain News*, June 11, 1908, 4.

they found that it was a .44-caliber revolver; the bullets from the crime scene came from a .32-caliber handgun. At the same time, O'Neil, who claimed not be at the Jameses' house that evening, later recanted after authorities found his hat there. He then stated that Julia and Sarah had asked him to spend the night because they feared Lynn. O'Neil also happened to own a .32-caliber revolver.

Regardless of the contradictory evidence, the furor in Pueblo did not dissipate in the days following the murder. Indeed, the delay in Lynn's capture only seemed to fuel the hatred. Thus, so concerned were authorities when they finally apprehended Lynn that they arraigned him secretly in Pueblo and quickly returned him over what would become the Tortilla Curtain to Colorado Springs.<sup>39</sup> Lynn, secured at the El Paso County jail like so many others because the situation in Pueblo was too volatile, knew that his fate was sealed regardless of the evidence. The issue was not the crime but his race. "...He knows he is doomed to hang because he is a negro," observed the *Gazette*, "and that he will either be lynched or sentenced to death."<sup>40</sup> At his trial in Pueblo on June 10, 1908, the jury took only fourteen minutes to render its verdict: guilty of murder in the first degree. According to the *Rocky Mountain News*, it was the speediest verdict and overall the shortest murder trial in the history of Colorado. Unsurprisingly, the jury recommended the death sentence, reinstated in wake of the Kimblern lynching. Lynn immediately protested that he had not been given a fair trial and maintained his innocence until his execution.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> "Negro Secretly Taken to Court; Mob Feared," *Denver Post*, May 29, 1908, 10.

<sup>40</sup> "Says There Is No Hope," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 24, 1908, 7.

<sup>41</sup> "Negro Murderer Doomed to Hang," *Denver Post*, June 11, 1908, 10; "Lynn Must Die, Is Verdict in 14 Minutes," 4.

The Lynn incident was remarkable in the history of violence in southern Colorado for two reasons. First, it was the only time in Pueblo and, according to the *Denver Post*, “probably the first time in the history of Colorado,” that authorities identified and punished the leaders of an attempted lynching. After news reached Pueblo that Lynn had been apprehended, a lynch mob formed, led by the ironically named John Brown. The mob appeared on horseback, dragging a rope, and broke into the Pueblo County Jail. Deputies, however, anticipating violence, brought Lynn to the safety of Colorado Springs and the El Paso County Jail instead. Pueblo District Attorney S. Harrison White then filed charges against Brown, Fred Beasley, Alfred Lovett, and M. Allen with “conspiracy to murder.” “There will be no mob violence if I can help it while I am in office,” demanded White. “I do not believe in lynch law and I will prosecute these cases to the finish.”<sup>42</sup> The men involved each had a troubled history with the law, with Lovett recently charged with public drunkenness and Beasley as an accessory to murder. The state later dropped the charges against Beasley but prosecuted the others, all of whom served brief sentences.<sup>43</sup>

Second, the incident was also notable for unifying the state’s rather small and scattered African American community. Led by prominent African Americans in Pueblo, over 100 blacks from across Colorado organized and signed a petition asking Governor Henry Buchtel to commute Lynn’s sentence to give his defense more time to craft an appeal, particularly given the contradictory firearms evidence. Former Pueblo District Attorney George W. Collins brought the petition to Denver only to discover that the governor was on a hunting trip. The attorney general’s office accepted the petition, but

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<sup>42</sup> “Prosecution For Men Who Led Mob Against Negro,” *Denver Post*, May 27, 1908, 5; “City Briefs: Lynn Still Here,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 29, 1908, 12; “Men Charged with Leading a Mob Face Trial,” *Rocky Mountain News*, May 28, 1908, 8.

<sup>43</sup> “State News,” *Rocky Mountain News*, May 11, 1911, 5.

did not act upon it. James Lynn was hanged on October 8, 1908. He was the nineteenth person executed at Cañon City since the state penitentiary opened on November 8, 1889, and the second African American. The first was William H. Davis, also convicted of murder by a Pueblo jury. He was hanged on September 2, 1891.<sup>44</sup>

### **Race and Loyalty During Wartime**

World War I accelerated incidents of racial discrimination and violence in Pueblo as it did in cities across the United States. And the appearance of African Americans in uniform, particularly in urban space, was a highly combustible formula, especially in the wake of the East St. Louis race riot in May and June of 1917. An explosion was inevitable and came later that same summer. On August 23, after police in Houston, Texas, beat a number of black soldiers from nearby Camp Logan, 156 soldiers returned to the city, where heavily armed police and white citizens met them. The resulting race riot left twenty people dead. At courts-martial following the mutiny, forty-one black soldiers were given life sentences. Nineteen were executed.<sup>45</sup>

Even before the Houston riot, black soldiers faced rampant discrimination and violence in cities across the West. Following the riot, the situation became untenable, especially in Pueblo. In October 1917, the U.S. Army mobilized the Second Colorado Infantry, encamped in South Pueblo at the Colorado State Fairgrounds, rechristened Camp Gunter in honor of Colorado Governor Julius C. Gunter. It was Gunter who then

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<sup>44</sup> "Try to Save Neck of Murderer of Pueblo Girl," *Rocky Mountain News*, n.d., 7; "Negro Murderer Seeks a Pardon," *Denver Post*, October 8, 1908, 2; "Lynn Is Hanged as He Protests His Innocence," *Rocky Mountain News*, October 9, 1908, 1, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Joe William Jr. Trotter, *The African American Experience, Volume II: From Reconstruction* (Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 2000).

ordered a battalion of black soldiers to take their place. Not surprisingly, because African Americans in uniform, with access to weapons, and in affluent South Pueblo upset the definitions and boundaries of the city's established racial order, conflicts with the white population arose immediately. On October 16, the camp sent its all-white provost guard (military police) to locate and detain Richard Sims, "a negro soldier at Camp Gunter," who had apparently overstayed his leave of absence. The guards located him in the city's rowdy south Union Avenue district at a rooming house owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. George West, also black. A shootout ensued and a stray bullet struck the leg of a passerby, Hector Chiairglione, editor and publisher of *L'Unione*, the city's most prominent Italian-language newspaper. (Incidentally, Pueblo's Italians celebrated Chiairglione for elevating Columbus Day to a national holiday.) While police conceded that they could not determine who fired the bullet that struck the newspaper editor, they nonetheless arrested Sims as well as the Wests. And just for good measure "several negro soldiers were brought to police headquarters yesterday and questioned." Pueblo police did not detain the white guards involved in the same shootout, even though it appears they were the only ones to have discharged their weapons and, thus, likely shot Chiairglione.<sup>46</sup>

Scuffles between black soldiers and white Puebloans, particularly the police, continued unabated into November, forcing Colorado National Guard leadership to act. It relocated black soldiers from the fairgrounds to a stretch of unpopulated high plains between Pueblo and Cañon City, ostensibly to guard railroads in the area. The place was

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<sup>46</sup> "Guardsmen in New Pueblo Barracks," *Pueblo Chieftain*, June 29, 1917, 1; "Second Colorado Infantry Was Encamped in Pueblo Few Months," *Pueblo Chieftain*, December 30, 1917, 12; "Soldier in Mixup; Shots Are Fired," *Pueblo Chieftain*, October 18, 1917, 5.

dreary, treeless, windy, and visible for miles. (It would later become the site of the federal government's highest security prison.) They also issued strict orders severely limiting the mobility of black soldiers in the city. "Negro soldiers found in Pueblo without transportation to their camps and without written leave of absence from their commanding officers will be arrested..." the *Chieftain* warned. "Captain Cates asked that the police arrest every negro soldier seen in the city unless the man could produce a railroad military pass...and also a leave of absence issued by the commanding officer."<sup>47</sup>

Yet the upheaval of World War I was not limited to conflicts between white and black. For immigrants from Germany and the Austrian Empire, questions of loyalty brought with them an erosion of their citizenship and even the privileges of whiteness. Beginning with the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, Germans and Austrians in America began to see their race (the pre-World War II term for ethnicity or nationality) trump their color. Anti-German sentiment exploded during the war, supported by government policies such as a 1917 prohibition law and a regulation enacting English literacy tests. German towns changed their names; families dropped German surnames. The federal government detained over 6,000 German and Austrian nationals as alleged subversives and threats to national security. By 1918 the Justice Department determined that it could even strip "disloyal" naturalized Germans and Austrians of their citizenship. Many thousands more faced harassment, beatings, and any other number of public humiliations, including at least one known lynching.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> "Orders Arrest of Negro Troopers Minus Passes," *Pueblo Chieftain*, November 17, 1917, 8.

<sup>48</sup> Nelson Lichtenstein, Susan Strasser, and Roy Rosenzweig, *Who Built America? Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society*, vol. 2: Since 1877, American Social History Project (New York: Worth Publishers, 2000), 293–94; Frederick C. Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German-Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press,

It was in this context that Pueblo's black soldiers and Austrians, which at that time could mean German-speaking Austrians as well as any other ethnic group within the vast Austro-Hungarian Empire, met in conflict. Moreover, the situation was ripe for sensational journalism, a product the *Chieftain* was more than happy to provide. On the evening of December 17, 1917, Mary Caroline Pelc, a seventeen-year-old store clerk, left her employer downtown and began her arduous walk home to the Grove neighborhood. According to Pueblo newspapers, Pelc suffered a congenital disability that resulted in a limp, forcing her to use a cane. Waiting at home were her parents, George and Mary Pelc, who were both born in Slovenia, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and arrived in the United States in 1886. They immediately settled in Pueblo, where Mary Caroline and her siblings were born and raised. Anchored around St. Mary Help of Christians Catholic Church, the Grove was one of Pueblo's closest-knit ethnic neighborhoods. Slovenian settler Joe Egan originally purchased the tract, noted for its large stand of cottonwood trees, and sold lots to fellow Slovenian immigrants. By 1910, over 2,400 Slovenians lived in Pueblo, most of them in the Grove. Yet like Pueblo's other ethnic enclaves, the Grove contained small, tightly packed houses and was environmentally undesirable. Indeed it was regular and severe flooding on the Arkansas River that watered and nurtured the neighborhood's namesake cottonwood grove. Additionally, the Colorado Smelter was located immediately south, the Pueblo Smelter to the north, and the sprawling yards of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad to the west.<sup>49</sup>

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1974), 6, 9–10, 14; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 210–11.

<sup>49</sup> “Negro Soldier Assaults Crippled Austrian Girl,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, December 18, 1917, 1; “1920 United States Federal Census, s.v. ‘George Pelc’ Pueblo, Pueblo County, Colorado,” Ancestry.com, accessed June 3, 2015; “1920 United States Federal Census, s.v. ‘Mary Mehle’

Regardless of its environmental problems, the Grove was supposed to be a safe place for the city's Slovenians. But according the *Chieftain*, Pelc noticed that a young black man in a military uniform followed her as she crossed into the neighborhood. When she passed between Spring and Park streets, near C Street, in the heart of the Grove, the man allegedly pulled her into an alley and violently raped, beat, tortured, and robbed her. She was only a block from home. Pueblo police responded quickly, arresting every black soldier then in the city and issuing warrants for the arrest of all black soldiers on leave from the Cañon City camp, regardless of their destinations. All would be paraded before the victim for identification.<sup>50</sup>

Yet the *Chieftain*'s portrayal of events warranted some suspicion, especially as it was nearly identical to patterns Ida B. Wells identified in the American South more than two decades earlier. Wells investigated lynchings that resulted from white women accusing black men of rape. What she discovered was not only a pattern of unsubstantiated claims, but situations in which such accusations were a way to neutralize and punish black men who were making economic progress that threatened white Southerners, just as African-American soldiers were doing to the established racial order in Pueblo. Moreover, Wells found cases in which newspapers reduced the apparent victim's age, invented maladies, or otherwise sensationalized the story to play up the helplessness of the white woman in the face of the apparent perverse and insatiable

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Pueblo, Pueblo County, Colorado"; Mary Therese Anstey, Cheria Yost, and Adam Thomas, *Potica, Pints, and Prayers in Old Bojon Town* (Denver: Historitecture, 2014), 6.

<sup>50</sup> "Negro Soldier Assaults Crippled Austrian Girl," 1.



sexual appetite of her black assailant. The *Chieftain*'s headline spoke volumes: "Negro Soldier Assaults Crippled Austrian Girl."<sup>51</sup>

Whether the account was in fact accurate or a case of the most loathsome yellow journalism, Pueblo's Austrians may have sensed an opportunity to express their loyalty through an age-old tradition of white American citizenship: lynching a man of color. Certainly the lynch mob itself provided a pretext for Slovenians to leave the confines of the Grove, even at the height of wartime suspicion, and appropriate the most prominent of Pueblo's public spaces: the streets around the old City Hall and the jail it contained. Just as swiftly as the police arrested black soldiers, Slovenians in the Grove expressed "considerable indignation...and talk of a lynching was heard."<sup>52</sup> A day after she was assaulted, Pelc identified Sergeant Lee Smith (also known as Lewis or Louis Smith) as her attacker. The news spread quickly to the Grove, and the *Chieftain* applauded the craftiness of the neighborhood's residents in trying to seize Smith. At nine o'clock that evening, someone called in a general riot at 1709 Schley Street, far south in the city's Bessemer neighborhood. With police thus distracted, a mob of between fifty and seventy-five Slovenians flooded the jail, then manned only by the desk sergeant and an officer who had just popped in to visit him. "They filed in the front door of headquarters so quickly and rapidly that the sergeant was not aware of their presence until the words 'We want that nigger' came from a dozen throats at the same time." While the desk sergeant insisted Smith was not in the jail, several went to inspect the cells while others guarded the officers, who somehow still managed to raise an alarm. Meanwhile, the crowd

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<sup>51</sup> Ida B. Wells, "The Malicious and Untruthful White Press," in *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (New York: New York Age, 1892); Ida B. Wells, "Lynch Law in All Its Phases" (Speech, Tremont Temple, Boston, February 13, 1893).

<sup>52</sup> "Negro Soldier Assaults Crippled Austrian Girl," 1.

remaining outside began to chant “lynch him.” Yet with the arrival of more officers and the failure to find Smith, the crowd departed. Unbeknownst to them, police had taken Smith across the Tortilla Curtain, to the El Paso County Jail, for his own protection.<sup>53</sup>

Yet the Slovenians were not finished. Working in strict secrecy, law enforcement officials brought Smith back to Pueblo the following day for his arraignment. Despite the best efforts of police, word reached the Grove and a mob of Slovenians again assembled before City Hall, this time angrier, better armed, and with Mary Caroline Pelc among them to identify her attacker. The Slovenians figured officers would return Smith to the city jail following his hearing. Governor Gunter, however, ordered police to remove Smith from the city to a safe, undisclosed location, which they later revealed as the El Paso County Jail. While cooler heads again prevailed, police did detain one Slovenian, Max Putterman, the impromptu spokesman for the mob. As the crowd “dispersed reluctantly” they gathered on the Main Street Bridge and fired their pistols into the Arkansas River. Even though Pelc was never able with any certainty to identify Smith as her attacker, the state sentenced him to life in the Colorado State Penitentiary, in Cañon City.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, a little over a month after Pelc’s assault, George Salos, a Greek steelworker, was accused of nearly the same crime against an unidentified girl. While “the sordid details are unprintable” and the crime raised “many expressions of

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<sup>53</sup> “Austrians Seek to Lynch Negro Soldier,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, December 19, 1917, 1.

<sup>54</sup> “Mob Makes Second Attempt to Take Negro from City Jail,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, December 20, 1917, 1–2; “Colored Prisoner Is Taken Away and Present Location Is Secret,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, December 21, 1917, 6; “Police Weave Tighter Web Around Smith as Friends Hunt Alibi,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, December 22, 1917, 4; “Smith Sentences to Life Term for Attack on Girl,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, May 23, 1918, 3.

indignation from prominent men in all walks of life,” it never incited the same level of public demonstration and threats of violence.<sup>55</sup>

Yet not all Puebloans reacted negatively toward uniformed African Americans during World War I. Indeed on some rare occasions, blacks received the city’s respect and protection against perceived discrimination at the hands of the U.S. military. For instance, in late June 1917, Robarr R. Edmonson responded to a recruitment drive at the Pueblo shops of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The Tuskegee graduate was a respected mechanical engineer and skilled machinist. Along with thirty-four other men from the shop, he volunteered to serve in the Second Reserve Engineers. From the applications, the railroad’s president, B.F. Bush, selected four candidates, including Edmonson, which the Army subsequently approved and ordered immediately to St. Louis. Even though the engineer clearly identified himself as “colored,” a Colonel Townsend informed Edmonson that “this is strictly a white man’s regiment.” The commander conceded that Edmonson’s application was without error and his experience and education met and even exceeded the job requirements. However, the Army argued, the position required someone who spoke French. At that point, Edmonson continued the conversation in French, a language in which he was fluent. Embarrassed, Colonel Townsend escalated the issue to a Major Hall “who admitted they were ‘up against it.’” After much vacillation, the major offered Edmonson a position in the mess department, which of course he declined. Edmonson returned to Pueblo, receiving a hearty hero’s welcome at the shops.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> “Greek Steel Worker Held for County on Serious Charge,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, January 25, 1918, 3.

<sup>56</sup> “Army Turns Down Negro Mechanic,” *Broad Axe*, July 6, 1917, 4.

### **Violence in Europe, Violence in Mexico, and Violence in Pueblo**

The apparent attack on Mary Pelc and the attempted lynching of Lee Smith was only one of many incidents that gripped Pueblo in the fall of 1917 through the summer of 1919. The violence during that time represented an astonishingly tangled web of racial and ethnic identities and hostilities and extended from the steelworks to the flophouses, from Mexico City to Denver. The capstone event of the period began with the murder of two mixed-race women, implicated Italians, resulted in the conviction of a black man, and ended in the lynching of two Mexicans. The violence turned popular opinion in Colorado against Pueblo. It provoked sentiments percolating since the attempt to lynch William Lawrence seventeen years earlier. International boundaries and the Tortilla Curtain seemingly merged. And it all played out in the busiest streets of Pueblo as the glorious new City Hall rose from the sandy clay along the banks of the Arkansas River.

On the evening of November 8, 1917, a tenant of the “Tom Protho negro rooming house” at 188 Central Main Street, mere steps from the old City Hall and well within view of the rising cupola of the new City Hall, tripped and fell over something on the dark sidewalk in front of the flophouse. A block removed from Pueblo’s more respectable hotels, the Tom Protho house consisted of an aging, two-story, wood-frame building fronting Central Main Street, with a long line of single-story shacks attached to the rear of it. Running along the north side of the building were the extensive yards of the Santa Fe Railway, and across the street was a meatpacking company. The heap on the sidewalk turned out to be the body of Willie McKenzie, also known as Willie Mitchell, whom newspapers identified as a twenty-one-year-old “mulatto” woman. As a crowd gathered, someone mentioned that the woman usually walked with a female companion. The group

fanned out and discovered a trail of blood leading from McKenzie's body to the alley behind the boarding house. In a vacant lot they found, strewn "on a pile of tin cans," the body of Irene Walker, twenty, also identified as mulatto. Both had been shot in the darkened alley; Walker died where she fell while McKenzie managed to drag herself a considerable distance to Central Main Street before succumbing to the bullet wound in her chest. There were no witnesses, and no one reported hearing gunfire, even though the shooting occurred between 7:30 and 9 p.m. in Pueblo's busy downtown. Police headquarters at the old City Hall was less than two blocks away.

Yet police had no suspects, no weapon, no motive, but plenty of speculation, much of it fueled by simmering racial animosity. For instance, detectives initially ruled out any black suspects because, as the *Chieftain* put it, "The mysterious manner in which the women were killed leads the police to believe that the element of cunning and craftiness which entered into the murder was not the planning of the brain of a negro."<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, the testimony of McKenzie's mother as well as letters found in the victim's possession immediately implicated a black man: John Richardson, a steelworker with whom McKenzie lived and the father of her seven-month-old daughter. McKenzie came to police a few months earlier after Richardson told her that he had killed an Italian laborer at the steelworks by crushing his head, took \$600 from his money belt, and staged the scene to look like a workplace accident. The Pueblo County Sheriff arrested Richardson but could find no evidence of foul play beyond McKenzie's confession. Police released Richardson three weeks prior to McKenzie's murder, and he fled to Mexico, where he wrote letters forgiving his former lover and begging her to join him.

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<sup>57</sup> "Two Negro Women Lured to Alley and Murdered," *Pueblo Chieftain*, November 9, 1917, 1, 2.

Police, however, discounted Richardson's involvement in the McKenzie-Walker slaying because it was "...hardly likely that he could pay a visit to this city without meeting some person who knew him as he is widely known here among the negro residents."<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, acquaintances of the women told police that Walker had attracted the attention of a man who may have followed her to Pueblo from Denver. The *Chieftain* described him as "an undersized white man, probably a Mexican, but at any rate a foreigner." With the combination of eyewitness accounts and the Richardson story, the "white man, probably a Mexican" evolved into an Italian and the motive changed from passion to revenge.<sup>59</sup>

The *Chieftain's* equating Mexicans with whiteness is particularly notable, especially given the racial violence toward Mexicans that would ultimately and tragically conclude this episode. As historian Thomas A. Guglielmo points out, Mexicans and Mexican Americans occupied a "complicated location in the racial orders of the U.S. South and Southwest." In most cases, federal law and practice, notably the census, classified Mexicans as white or "refrained from explicitly defining them as 'Negro' or 'colored.'" Thus in segregated states, Mexicans could theoretically attend white schools or ride in white railroad cars. In practice, however, Mexicans faced rampant discrimination, forced to work lower-paying jobs, living in less-desirable locations, and

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<sup>58</sup> "Murderer of Two Negro Women Still Eludes Police Clutches," *Pueblo Chieftain*, November 10, 1917, 4.

<sup>59</sup> "Two Negro Women Lured to Alley and Murdered," 1-2.

lacking political power. “Here, then, was a truly in-between people,” Guglielmo observes, “neither black nor white, and truly disadvantaged.”<sup>60</sup>

But before Mexicans entered the fray, creative detective work connected the murders to one of the most notorious criminals in the history of southeastern Colorado, Clifford Sprouls (also spelled Sproules and Sprowls), so-called “‘Dick the Digger’ for his tactic of digging through the walls of buildings.” Police suspected the young black man was responsible for dozens of thefts, assaults, and attempted murders in Pueblo, Fowler, Fountain, and even in Colorado Springs. Sprouls was born in Wichita, Kansas, on March 15, 1895, and arrived in Pueblo at the age of three. Even as a child he and his brothers had their share of scrapes with the law. Sprouls served four years in the Colorado State Industrial School for Boys, in Golden, for stealing a horse. Upon his release, he worked as a teamster for the steelworks, in one of the brickyards, and for the Capers & Helwig Coal Company, as he supported his widowed mother and two younger brothers.<sup>61</sup>

Once in police custody, Sprouls sought a convenient scapegoat, accusing Mexicans for his crimes. It was an increasingly popular and apparently effective defense in Pueblo because blaming Mexicans preyed on white assumptions that had simmered from the nineteenth century that Mexicans were inherently shiftless and indolent, naturally given to crime.<sup>62</sup> Bolstering the opinion was the more recent and lingering violence against white American citizens in Mexico and along the border—violence that

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<sup>60</sup> Thomas A. Guglielmo, “Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas,” *Journal of American History*, March 2006, 1215–16.

<sup>61</sup> “U.S. World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, for Clifford Sprouls,” Ancestry.com, accessed July 27, 2015; “More Robberies of Negro Are Uncovered by Police Officers,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, June 8, 1918, 4.

<sup>62</sup> White, “Race Relations in the American West,” 399.

dominated newspaper headlines in the American Southwest. Foremost among their concerns were the tactics of Mexican revolutionary José Doroteo Arango Arámbula, better known by his pseudonym, Francisco “Pancho” Villa, and his followers. After President Wilson pulled American support from Villa in favor of his rival, Mexican President Venustiano Carranza, the revolutionary turned against the United States and, most infamously, attacked Columbus, New Mexico, on March 9, 1916, killing eighteen Americans. (Coincidentally, it was black soldiers from the Third Battalion of the Twenty-Fourth United States Infantry Regiment, the same one involved in the Huston riot, who were then stationed in Columbus, that helped track Villa and battled his forces in old Mexico.)

Thus in Clifford Sprouls’s confession, the first in Pueblo elicited through positive fingerprint evidence, the accused insisted that while he was indeed an accomplice to the crime spree, he served merely as a lookout. The primary perpetrators were two Mexican men, “being short and thick set, both aged about 30 to 35 years and both strangers in Pueblo.”<sup>63</sup> It was the last part of the description, “both strangers in Pueblo,” that rendered Mexicans such convenient and convincing suspects. The city’s Mexican population grew quickly because of liberal immigration policies stemming from the demand for cheap manual labor in the sugar beet and steel industries, yet it remained largely concentrated and isolated in places like Salt Creek and, within the city, the Peppersauce Bottoms neighborhood. Moreover, because the migration to and from Mexico remained rather fluid, the actions of unknown Mexican criminals became all the more plausible. Crossing the U.S.-Mexico border at this time was remarkably easy; it required no passports and

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<sup>63</sup> “Police Capture Dick the Digger and He Confesses,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, June 7, 1918, 1.



few checkpoints existed. While there were restrictions against the migration of the sick and criminals, federal border agents rarely enforced them. As historian George J. Sánchez points out, “Both American officials and entering aliens understood that it was the labor needs of the American Southwest that defined Mexican migration to the United States and not laws drawn up in Washington.”<sup>64</sup> Yet Pueblo Police recognized Sprouls’s story, even with its rather convincing details, as a canard. They insisted he worked alone.<sup>65</sup>

But the efforts of an astute Pueblo detective linked Sprouls to far more infamous crimes than petty larceny. Charles Gatza, a Polish immigrant and one of Sprouls’s victims, connected the accused burglar to the unsolved McKenzie and Walker murders. Gatza was a longtime police officer for the City of Pueblo as well as for the Santa Fe Railway. He first encountered Sprouls while investigating a break-in at the L.B. Price Mercantile Company, a small, downtown store, at 704 Grand Avenue. Gatza surprised Sprouls, who fired his revolver once at the officer, the bullet hitting a fortuitously placed flashlight in Gatza’s shirt pocket. Gatza later investigated the Walker and McKenzie murders and, by examining circumstantial evidence, particularly alibies, convincingly connected Sprouls to them. While he never obtained enough hard evidence to charge Sprouls with the crime, Gatza nonetheless succeeding in painting Sprouls as a far more violent criminal than the suspect himself would admit. Indeed, the murders of people of color received little attention in the Pueblo press beyond an initial mention of the incident itself. But in the case of Sprouls, who had flaunted racial norms in Pueblo by brazenly

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<sup>64</sup> George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 51.

<sup>65</sup> “Police Capture Dick the Digger and He Confesses,” 1; Alva A. Swain, “Martial Law and Civil Justice,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, December 14, 1917, 9; “Police Seek New Solution of Noted Murder Mystery,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, June 10, 1918, 8.

stealing from prominent white residents, his connection to the McKenzie-Walker slayings provided the means to paint him as a far more sinister suspect.<sup>66</sup>

Yet Gatza's efforts to vilify Sprouls paled in comparison to the criminal's own actions. At around 2:30 in the afternoon of October 15, 1918, Sprouls's wife came to visit her spouse at the jail in the back of the old City Hall. She brought for her husband a change of clothes. The officer in charge of the jail, W.W. Green, inspected her bundle but somehow missed a revolver concealed within. After his wife departed, Sprouls fired two shots at Green, killing him. The prisoner then aimed his pistol at another officer who had responded to the gunfire, forcing the guard to open the cell door and release him. Police and well-armed citizens apprehended Sprouls about six blocks away, chasing him through downtown. By eight o'clock, police had capture the suspect and returned him to jail. But knowing all too well the pattern of racially charged vigilante justice in Pueblo, the Pueblo County Sheriff and two U.S. Marshalls quickly loaded Sprouls into an automobile and sped him northward across the Tortilla Curtain to Colorado Springs where, once again, a man of color sat in the El Paso County Jail to protect him from a Pueblo lynch mob.

Back in Pueblo a lynch mob formed quickly, arriving at the jail only minutes after Sprouls and his law enforcement escorts departed for Colorado Springs. While the first mob eventually dissipated, a second one formed and demanded access to the jail. Pueblo police officers then acquiesced, allowing a committee to search cell-by-cell, knowing

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<sup>66</sup> "1910 United States Federal Census, s.v. 'Charles Gatza' Pueblo, Pueblo County, Colorado," Ancestry.com, accessed July 27, 2015; "Police Seek New Solution of Noted Murder Mystery," 8.

Sprouls was gone. Smaller mobs arrived throughout the night, but dispersed as quickly as they formed.<sup>67</sup>

The Sprouls incident was notable because, for the first time, Pueblo lynch mobs also threatened the relative safety and tranquility of Colorado Springs, forcing the defense of the Tortilla Curtain. In the past, railroad schedules dictated travel between the cities while rough wagon roads limited other options. But with the advent of the automobile and improved highways, quick transportation at anytime was possible. Thus El Paso County Sheriff J.H. Weir worried that a mob was pursuing Sprouls's car. He thus dispatched his deputies to Fountain to fortify the county line and to send immediate word to Colorado Springs if any mob from Pueblo approached it. Weir received a message later that night that Green's friends were indeed gathering a lynch mob to descend on Colorado Springs. In response, Weir immediately sent Sprouls further north to the county jail in Denver. But his actions were hardly altruistic, based instead upon a calculation of racial supremacy. "I didn't want to take any chances," Weir remarked. "It would be a shame to have to kill a good white man to protect this negro."<sup>68</sup>

Safely incarcerated in the Denver County Jail, an enormous, stone structure with Gothic features and, like the El Paso County Jail, in a park-like setting, Sprouls would face a trial by jury rather than by "Judge Lynch." On February 27, 1919, that jury found the accused guilty of first-degree murder in the death of officer W.W. Green. They sentenced him to die by hanging at the state penitentiary in Cañon City. On June 27, the

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<sup>67</sup> "Negro Who Robbed Fountain Bank Kills Pueblo Turnkey, Escapes and Is Retaken," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, October 16, 1918, 5; "Mobs Form to Lynch Negro; Spirited Away," *Pueblo Chieftain*, October 16, 1918, sec. 1, 1.

<sup>68</sup> "Sprouls Removed to Denver for Safety; Lynching Is Feared," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, October 18, 1918, 5; "Sproules Must Hang Is Finding of Trial Jury," *Pueblo Chieftain*, February 28, 1919, 1.

State Board of Pardons denied Sprouls's petition for clemency and set his execution for the week of July 20. As far as the white population of Pueblo was concerned, justice would finally be served. As the *Chieftain* put it "SPROULS MUST DIE."<sup>69</sup>

Or at least that is what they thought until newly elected Governor Oliver Henry Shoup entered the fray. A long-time resident of Colorado Springs, he was the epitome of the leisured, enlightened professional class General William Jackson Palmer wished to cultivate in his city. Shoup made a fortune through the extraction of the West's natural resources and spent his long retirement in public service. Born on December 13, 1869, in Champaign County, Illinois, Shoup arrived in Colorado Springs with his family in November 1882. He attended the city's public schools as well as Colorado College, in Colorado Springs. In 1888, the future governor began his professional career with Palmer himself, working for the general's Colorado Springs Company. In 1896 Shoup became the private secretary to mining, investment, and real estate magnate Verner Z. Reed. Then Shoup began exploring the fledgling oil industry. He struck it rich developing Wyoming oil fields as president of the Midwest Oil Company and the Midwest Refining Company. He sent his sons to Dartmouth while his daughter married into a powerful Denver family. A longtime pro-gold-standard Republican, Shoup ran for governor and won two terms, serving from 1919 to 1923. As governor, Shoup resided in a large house at the northern edge of the Colorado College campus, with views of Palmer Hall and its lush, green lawn to the north. "Indeed, his entire success is the result of his creative genius, his ability as a capable manager and his tireless energy," praised an anonymous biographer in language

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<sup>69</sup> "Sproules Must Hang Is Finding of Trial Jury," 1; "Sproules Must Die; State Board Denies Clemency," *Pueblo Chieftain*, June 28, 1918, 3.

reminiscent of Palmer's own accolades. "What he has today he has taken from the soil and no man had been the loser for it."<sup>70</sup>

On July 24, well within the week Sprouls was to hang, Shoup, an opponent of capital punishment, commuted the convict's sentence to life in prison. Pueblo was outraged. As usual the *Chieftain* led the charge, listing in highly inflammatory language the many crimes for which Sprouls was convicted and now, at least in the opinion of the newspaper's publisher and editors, would never face due justice. "The hangman's noose has been eluded, and Clifford Sprouls lives to scoff the scaffold and to hold as naught the verdict of twelve jurymen," the paper raged. "The murder...was one of the most cold blooded in the criminal history of Pueblo county—or of Colorado." The newspaper laid the blame squarely on Governor Shoup and, without a single source to back up its claim, the supposed meddling of Elijah P. Blakemore, a prominent black attorney who frequently represented African American defendants in high-profile cases and tested the state's civil rights statutes. He had defended Sprouls's wife.<sup>71</sup>

The decision only added fresh fuel to an already raging fire. Racial tensions continued to mount in Pueblo as they did in cities throughout the United States during the Red Summer of 1919, a period marked by numerous race riots across the country. Indeed, only three days after Shoup commuted Sprouls's sentence, a race riot erupted in Chicago that left over 500 people injured and thirty-eight dead; similar riots broke out in more than three dozen cities. "There was never a time in the history of our race in Pueblo more urgent for race council than now," wrote John Adams and F.W. Fluellen, of the Pueblo

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<sup>70</sup> Wilbur Fiske Stone, ed., "Oliver H. Shoup," in *History of Colorado*, vol. III (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918), 364–65; Rob Carrigan, "Oliver Henry Shoup: Colorado Workhorse Governor Connects Area's History," *Pikes Peak Courier*, January 31, 2013.

<sup>71</sup> "Sprouls Will Live to Laugh About Justice," *Pueblo Chieftain*, July 24, 1919.

Negro Business and Civic League, in an open letter to all black Puebloans that echoed sentiments from black leaders across the country. “You are advised that this is not the time to give ear to fire brand speakers or publications of any kind whatsoever: But the season for SOBER THINKING, DISCREET CONDUCT, WISE DIRECTION, FAITH IN THE FUTURE OF OUR TOWN, UNQUESTIONED DETERMINATION, AND PERSERVERANCE, to make good here.”<sup>72</sup>

Violence on the border as well as the xenophobia of World War I also increased tensions among whites and Mexicans in Pueblo. A deadly attack by Pancho Villa’s Villistas on American citizens in January 1916, near Santa Isabel, Chihuahua, resonated widely in Pueblo. The Americans were employees of the American Smelting and Refining Company, which had deep roots in Colorado, especially in Pueblo, where it operated the enormous Colorado Smelter and shared directors and investors in common with the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company. Villa’s subsequent attack on Columbus, New Mexico, only increased hatred toward Mexicans as the war in Europe provided a new lexicon for discrimination. Indeed, on March 8, 1918, the *Chieftain* featured an editorial from the *Washington Post* explicitly comparing Mexicans to America’s enemies in Europe. The article cited the most recent spate of Americans murdered at the hands of Mexican bandits while south of the border. “The United States properly resents the killing of Belgians, Serbians, Italians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Roumanians [sic] and others by Prussia,” the article begins. “Should not the United States resent the killing of Americans by Mexicans?” Yet despite rampant discrimination, the ceaseless conflict in

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<sup>72</sup> “Letter to Public from the Negro and Business League,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, October 3, 1919, 5.

Mexico only pushed more migrants north of the border. From 1900 to 1930, ten percent of Mexico's entire population emigrated to the American Southwest.<sup>73</sup>

At the same time the Mexican population increased in southern Colorado it also found more collective power. While the smelters and steelworks had drawn Mexican labor to Pueblo for years, in the first few decades of the twentieth century the vast expansion of irrigated farming in the Arkansas Valley east of Pueblo, particularly the cultivation and processing of sugar beets, created an enormous need for cheap, manual labor. Colorado sugar beet growers and processors initially imported Germans from Russia to toil in the fields. But as German-Russian families acquired their own farms and as the U.S. government increasingly restricted immigration from eastern Europe, sugar producers looked to Mexicans to fulfill their labor needs.

Mexican sugar beet workers first arrived in Rocky Ford, a heavily irrigated agricultural district in the Arkansas Valley east of Pueblo, in May 1900. Immediately they faced a skirmish with white workers. "The white men at work on the sugar factory construction think that the Mexicans are being hired to take their places for lower wages," the *Denver Times* observed, "and are determined the colored men shall not be allowed to settle here." But settle they did. According to census data, the number of people born in Mexico but residing in Colorado skyrocketed from just 2,543 in 1910 to 10,894 in 1920. The Mexican population in Pueblo County grew faster than anywhere else in the state. In 1910, just 303 people of Mexican birth lived in the county; by the end of the decade there

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<sup>73</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency, "Colorado Smelter," Overviews and Factsheets, (July 2015), <http://www2.epa.gov/region8/colorado-smelter>; "The Job That Must Be Done Some Time," *Pueblo Chieftain*, March 8, 1918, 8; Jerry H. Bently and Herbert F. Ziegler, *Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2000), 798–99.

were 2,486. Interestingly, the Mexican population in El Paso County grew by only 28 people during the same decade, from 202 to 230. And as Mexicans grew in number in southern Colorado, they grew in power as well. By the late summer of 1919, Mexican icing hands in Pueblo and Rocky Ford flexed their collective muscle by organizing a strike that triggered a massive refrigerated railroad car shortage at the height of the Arkansas Valley's lucrative melon season, infuriating growers and frustrating consumers.<sup>74</sup>

Topping off tensions was upheaval in Pueblo's massive white working class, particularly among its 6,500 steelworkers. Following armistice, the American Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers (AA) and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) launched a nationwide organizing campaign that met with strong resistance from fearful steel companies and politicians alike. But the heavy-handed tactics of their opponents only fueled the unions' organizing efforts. Worried it could overplay its hand, AFL leadership tried to balance the momentum of pro-union sentiment among steelworkers with their desire for a general strike to press for higher wages and better working conditions, only to meet with dissent from the membership. The National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers agreed to an open referendum on the strike in August.

With ninety-eight percent of steelworkers voting in favor of the action, the Great Steel Strike of 1919 was born. Steelworkers were particularly keen to strike at CF&I's Minnequa Works, where John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s Employee Representation Plan, a response to pacify labor in light of the negative publicity Rockefeller and his family

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<sup>74</sup> "News of the State: Labor Troubles at Rocky Ford," *Denver Times*, May 19, 1900, 5; University of Virginia, "Historical Census Browser," *Geospatial and Statistical Data Center*, 2004, <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/>; "Striking Mexicans in Melon District Cause Car Shortage," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 16, 1919, 4.



received following the Ludlow Massacre, ruled the shop floor. While the novel association between labor and management often met with some success addressing employee grievances, steelworkers were nonetheless disenchanted, finding the company union “paternal and undemocratic.” “Despite the presence of the Rockefeller Plan—in fact, specifically because of it—many CF&I workers joined the nationwide steel strike....” observes historian Jonathan H. Rees. “...[T]he strike at the Minnequa Works in 1919 suggested that the plan had failed in its core mission of pacifying labor.”<sup>75</sup>

Thus for two wayward Mexicans tossed suddenly into Pueblo’s churning caldron of racial, class, and labor unrest, the results were catastrophic. Around one o’clock in the morning, on Saturday, September 13, Claude Hudson, a laborer for the Missouri Pacific Railroad, sat on his porch at 508 West Second Street, “enjoying the cool evening” with his wife, Maude. Their house, a single-story, wood-framed dwelling, was situated in the city’s Peppersauce Bottoms neighborhood, an enclave of Mexican and African American laborers tucked between downtown and the massive railroad yards extending to the northwest. While the wide street grid from downtown extended into the neighborhood and the tree cover was generous, a tangle of railroads dissected the area at strange angles, even coming within a few feet of the rear of the Hudson residence. The neighborhood was a hodgepodge of industries and dwellings, including one of the few tenements in the city. Like Salt Creek, the Lower East Side, or the Grove, the area frequently flooded and was dangerously polluted. In an alley adjacent to the side of their house, the Hudsons saw

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<sup>75</sup> Joseph G Rayback, *A History of American Labor*, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 285–87; “Steel Crafts of Pueblo to Walk Out in Great Strike,” *Rocky Mountain News*, September 20, 1919, 1; Jonathan Rees, *Representation and Rebellion: The Rockefeller Plan at the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, 1914–1942* (Boulder, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 2010), 136.

stumbling through the darkness two Mexican men, one tall and the other short. They appeared to be drunk and spoke loudly. Jeff Evans, a veteran Pueblo police officer, approached the pair. While trying to address the shorter of the two men, the taller man punched the officer in the jaw. Evans staggered as the shorter man drew a pistol. The officer scrambled down the alley as a gunshot rang out behind him. He fell to his knees as a bullet tore through his shoulder. A second shot, fired at point-blank range, struck him in the head. Evans died, like so many other victims of Pueblo's violence, on the streets only a few blocks from the old and new city halls. In a strange twist of fate, the Hudsons, both black, suddenly found themselves the only witnesses of the murder of a white police officer, apparently at the hands of Mexicans.<sup>76</sup>

Police immediately launched a massive manhunt, searching "every nook and corner of Pueblo and its suburbs." A predawn tip took them to the undeveloped Irving Place district, in the northwest corner of the city, specifically to the depot, shops, and yard of the Colorado-Kansas Railway. The tiny railroad connected Pueblo northwest to Stone City and the Turkey Creek quarry, most recently used for the construction of the new City Hall. There, around 3 a.m., police discovered four Mexican men asleep in an old bunk car that apparently served as their home. They took them immediately to the Hudsons' house, where the couple identified one of them, a man named Salvatore or Santos Ortiz (spelled Ortiz in the Mexican press), the alleged accomplice. The Hudsons could not identify the other three men. Upon returning to the coach around 5 a.m., police found asleep another Mexican, "with a revolver by his side and 40 rounds of ammunition

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<sup>76</sup> "Patrolman Jeff Evans Shot and Killed By a Mexican," *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 13, 1919, 1; "Police Captured Alleged Slayers in Early Morning," *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 14, 1919, 1, 16; Sanborn Map Company, "Pueblo, Colorado, 1904," 3.

in his pockets.” Mr. and Mrs. Hudson positively identified him as the shooter, a man named José Gonzales (spelled González in the Mexican press). The Colorado-Kansas Railway employed both men. As trackmen, they may have played a part in shipping stone to the city hall construction site. At the very least, they maintained the track that made construction of the building possible.<sup>77</sup>

As in the past, a lynch mob formed quickly and seemed to possess inside information. Attempting to protect their prisoners, at least nominally, Pueblo police brought Gonzales and Orteiz to the Pueblo County Jail. Officers decided to move them in secret back to the city jail, reportedly to allow acquaintances to confirm the identities of the Mexican men. At around 9:30 p.m., a mob of about fifty people, their faces concealed under handkerchiefs, gathered behind the towering walls of the recently completed Memorial Hall (Figure 3.4), again uniting in a space that had become the center for rituals of violence. Borrowing a tactic the Slovenians perpetrated during the previous lynching attempt, someone called in a general riot in the Bessemer neighborhood, far south of downtown, leaving police headquarters empty. On the one hand, if the police had been serious about protecting their prisoners they would have foreseen the ruse. On the other hand, given the general mood of steelworkers and a looming strike, a riot near or at the steelworks was not farfetched. Darkness and an expected rainstorm further concealed the mob. As the assembly gathered all the streetlights downtown inexplicably went dark but came on again as the mob proceeded to the old City Hall and, via an open window, pointed a gun at Desk Sergeant McCaffery. He immediately surrendered,

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<sup>77</sup> “Police Captured Alleged Slayers in Early Morning,” 1, 16; “Quieren Negar Su Responsabilidad Por Los Ultimos Linchamientos Las Autoridades Yanquis de Colorado,” *Excelsior*, September 16, 1919, 2.

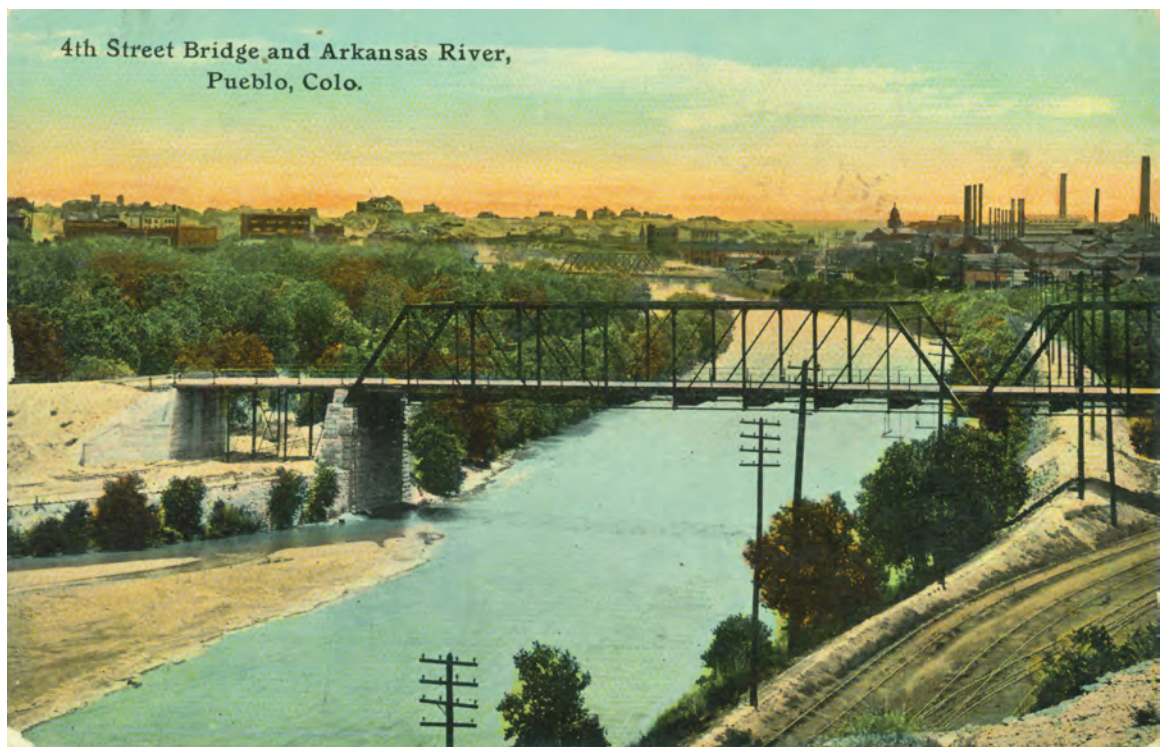
recalling later, “he never saw so many pistols in all his life.” The mob then forced City Health Officer Jim Byrne to open the cells. They grabbed the sleeping Mexicans, knocked them unconscious, and threw them into a waiting automobile.

The mob drove over a mile west to the West Fourth Street Bridge (Figure 3.9), tied inch-thick hemp ropes around the necks of Gonzales and Ortiz, and threw them over the railing toward the roiling Arkansas River, more than twenty feet below. The location was intentional. The bridge towered over the Peppersauce Bottoms neighborhood, where Evans’s murder took place and home to one of the largest concentrations of Mexicans in Pueblo. The site was also adjacent to the Colorado-Kansas Railway tracks, where Gonzales and Ortiz had worked. Even the river was a powerful symbol of white American hegemony and manifest destiny; the Arkansas was the border between the United States and Mexico until the Mexican-American war, when the United States seized much of the Southwest. The Pueblo press assured readers that the drop snapped the Mexicans’ necks, killing them instantly. The *Denver Post*, however, insisted the men slowly strangled to death. By the time police finally arrived at the scene, over a thousand people had gathered, despite the rainstorm. Police then struggled to disperse the crowd—not to clear the crime scene but for fear the bridge would collapse into the rain-swollen river. “New rope was used,” the *Chieftain* observed coolly, “showing that the mob leaders were fully prepared for the work beforehand.” The operation, from the time the mob gathered until police cut down the bodies, took just forty-two minutes. “Please do not call it a mob,” Officer Byrne pleaded. “A mob is a rabble, a disorderly collection of

men, acting without reasoning, and with a more or less crude and unsettled plan of action. I never saw or had anything to do with a better organization in all my life.”<sup>78</sup>

The Pueblo press immediately took charge of the message over the wire services, perpetuating a narrative that the Mexicans had a history of violence and that the lynchings were, rather than acts of racially motivated revenge, a protest against the governor, specifically his granting clemency to Clifford Sprouls. United Press Syndicate articles across the country led with the same sentence, “The lynching of two Mexicans

Figure 3.9. West Fourth Street Bridge circa 1912. Peppersauce Bottoms is situated in the trees behind the bridge. The Colorado-Kansas Railway is at left. Postcard from the author’s collection.



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<sup>78</sup> “Pueblo Mob Lynches Two Mexicans Accused of Murder of Policeman,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 14, 1919, 1, 11; “Pueblo Mob Beats and Hangs Two Prisoners,” *Rocky Mountain News*, September 14, 1919, 1; “Couldn’t Count Number in Mob,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 14, 1919, 1; “Crowd Was As Cool As Could Be,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 14, 1919, 1; “Rumors of Lynching Bee Floated Around All Day,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 14, 1919, 4; “And It Rained,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 14, 1919, 10.

here Saturday night was ‘a law and order’ protest against Governor Shoup’s leniency toward convicted murderers from this section, leaders of the mob declared today.” The *Coshocton [Ohio] Tribune* put it succinctly in its headline “Greasers are Lynched for Good Effect.” The logic was demonic. “The direction [the lynching] was necessary if the wanton killing of human beings in Pueblo was to be checked,” observed the *Denver Post* as it assessed the general sentiment in Pueblo. Newspapers also quickly connected the men to Pancho Villa, tapping into a seething narrative of racism and xenophobia emerging from the violence on the U.S.-Mexico border. One story emerged that the men were former Villistas themselves. More frequently, wire reports mentioned that Ortez was a cousin of Villa but assured readers “...the hangings were not due to hatred of Mexicans and was entirely thoughtless of international complications.” Curiously, the Villa connection does not appear in Mexican newspapers.<sup>79</sup>

By midnight, word of the lynching reached Governor Shoup in Colorado Springs. Understanding quite well the toxic national mood, he immediately cast shame on Pueblo and attempted to distance the rest of the state from the incident. “...I will use all the powers at my command to run down the mob leaders and to see that they are adequately punished,” the governor promised. “In times of unrest such as these thru [sic] which we are passing, outbreaks such as this at Pueblo can only serve to undermine public respect for the orderly processes of law and endanger the peace and safety of the nation.”<sup>80</sup>

Shoup then turned his attention to the Pueblo newspapers, which in their efforts to blame

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<sup>79</sup> “Deny Race Hatred Cause of Lynching,” *The Evening State Journal-Lincoln Daily News*, September 15, 1919, 1; “Greasers Are Lynched for Good Effect,” *Coshocton Tribune*, September 16, 1919, 8; “Pueblo Mob Beats and Hangs Two Prisoners,” 1; “Lynching of Two Mexicans Generally Upheld in Pueblo,” *Denver Post*, September 15, 1919, 2.

<sup>80</sup> “Gov. Shoup Announces He Will Seek Members Of Mob,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 14, 1919, 1.

him for the lynching, only invited the governor's scathing criticism of their own involvement in the deadly affair. "The Pueblo press has carried on an editorial campaign which cannot but incite the people to just such measures as resulted in the murder of Gonzales and Ortezt," the Governor rebuked in an official statement. "...The propaganda for mob violence is a dangerous expedient for newspapers to use in attempting to make political capital and, if they succeed in bringing about an outbreak which costs the lives of their fellow citizens, they cannot escape their share of the responsibility."<sup>81</sup>

And the Governor had a point. Of all the rhetoric the Evans murder incited, one element of the Hudsons' eyewitness account was dangerously inflammatory. According to the couple, as Gonzales and Ortezt walked by their house the Mexicans drunkenly bragged to a passing railroad switchman how they were "going to clean out all whites," a volatile comment indeed in the context of the Red Summer. Later reports contained more details and substantively changed the comment while reiterating that the men desired to touch off a race war in Pueblo. According to these later stories, Gonzales and Ortezt threatened to kill "every nigger in Peppersauce Bottoms." They further boasted about how they had already killed a dozen blacks in Mexico and "that they were going to add a dozen more to the list here." The *Chieftain* reprinted the comment without any qualification, but it certainly demanded further scrutiny. As recently arrived Mexican nationals working as unskilled railroad laborers, Gonzales and Ortezt likely spoke little English. Even if they could communicate in the language, they were less likely to speak to each other in anything other than Spanish. It is possible the Hudsons were fluent enough in Spanish to understand the comment and its context. As in the case of William

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<sup>81</sup> "Pueblo Mob Incited by Press Campaign," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, September 15, 1919, 1.

Lawrence in Salt Creek or here in Peppersauce Bottoms, African Americans and Mexicans often tended to work and live side-by-side in Pueblo.<sup>82</sup>

More disturbingly, however, the key witness may have patently manufactured the comment. In the weeks following the lynching, Claude Hudson, the testimony of whom the entire police investigation rested, proved less than reliable. Indeed, he was downright hostile toward Mexicans, further highlighting the complicated racial dynamics at work in Pueblo. It is hard to imagine why he would have wanted to incite a race war, but evidence suggests that Mr. Hudson was not on friendly terms with his Mexican neighbors. Indeed, a half hour before the lynch mob descended upon the city jail, Hudson called police to his home, reporting that he fired shots at three Mexican men “prowling around his place” and chased them for several blocks. While Mr. Hudson did indeed have a brand new pistol and it had been recently fired, police could find no evidence or witnesses to corroborate his story. Later Pablo Torrens, a Mexican steelworker, barged into the coroner’s inquest into the lynchings and demanded that police arrest Hudson, who was at that moment testifying. Torrens resided a block away from the Hudsons, at 620 West Fourth Street, and could have easily witnessed the lynching from his backyard. He reported that Mr. Hudson took to walking the streets of Peppersauce Bottoms and downtown Pueblo to brandish his revolver “every time he comes in sight of a Mexican.” The previous day Torrens ran into Hudson, “who displayed the revolver in a threatening manner.” A

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<sup>82</sup> “Patrolman Jeff Evans Shot and Killed By a Mexican,” 1, 16; “Rumors of Lynching Bee Floated Around All Day,” 4; “Pueblo Mob Beats and Hangs Two Prisoners,” 2; “Pueblo Officials Find No Clew to Mexican Lynchers,” *Rocky Mountain News*, September 16, 1919, 9; “Dos Mexicanos son Linchados en Colorado,” *Excelsior*, September 15, 1919, 2; “El Linchamiento de 2 Mexicanos En Pueblo, Colorado, E. Unidos,” *Excelsior*, September 17, 1919, 2; “Pueblo Prepares for Any Emergency,” *Salt Lake Telegram*, September 15, 1919, 5; “El Linchamiento de 2 Mexicanos En Pueblo, Colorado, E. Unidos,” 2.



sheriff's deputy then searched Hudson and found "a good sized nickel-plated revolver secreted inside his shirt." District Attorney Laurence J. Langon, on hand for the inquest, ordered the deputy to arrest Hudson and take him to the Pueblo County Jail. For his part, Hudson claimed that threats against him increased following Evans's murder and especially after the lynchings. As the *Chieftain* concluded, "he appears to be mortally afraid of every Mexican he meets."<sup>83</sup>

### **An International Event Racializes a Regional Border**

The national press coverage may have had the unintended consequence of bringing Pueblo's Mexican population into the forefront of national consciousness, just as correspondents and travel writers had done a half century earlier. United Press wire reports mentioned, "The large Mexican quarter here is quiet today." The Associated Press described the "hundreds of Mexicans" who visited the morgue Monday following the lynching to view the bodies of Gonzales and Orteiz, which had been laid beside Evans, and how they then dispersed in large groups throughout the city. Moreover, following the lynching Police called in reserves due to the fear of mob violence—not from whites but from the city's large Mexican population. The press in Mexico City reiterated that the number of expatriates in Pueblo and its surrounding area was substantial. Interestingly they suggested that the large crowds at the morgue had been coerced into viewing the bodies of their countrymen. Moreover, the American press frequently mentioned the

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<sup>83</sup> "Pueblo Mob Beats and Hangs Two Prisoners," 2; "Negro Witness Is Taken to Jail for Carrying Pistol," *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 19, 1919, 5.

connection between the accused and Pancho Villa, linking Pueblo directly to the crisis on the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>84</sup>

The high-profile involvement of the Carranza government in what appeared to be a local affair only boosted the perception of Pueblo as an extraterritorial Mexican city or at least a city with an unusually large population of Mexican nationals. Within hours of the incident, the Mexican foreign ministry formally protested the lynchings to the U.S. State Department. Following instructions from Mexican Ambassador Ignacio Bonillas, in Washington, D.C., the Mexican Consul in Denver, Adelaido José Ortiz, immediately complained to Governor Shoup and temporarily relocated the consulate to Pueblo so he could personally oversee an investigation on behalf of the Mexico government. Consul Ortiz also sought to keep the peace in Pueblo, imploring the city's Mexican residents to refrain from celebrating Mexican Independence Day, on September 16.<sup>85</sup>

The Mexican government and the State of Colorado publically sparred as a coroner's inquest "failed utterly to reveal the least clue to the identity of the persons who...lynched Gonzales and Ortez." Witnesses of the attack, primarily the officers who remained at the jail that Saturday night, painted a picture of a well-organized operation that went to extensive lengths to conceal the identities of its numerous operatives.

Beyond their handkerchiefs and low hats, the perpetrators apparently talked only in

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<sup>84</sup> "Deny Race Hatred Cause of Lynching," 1; "Pueblo Prepares for Any Emergency," 5; "Se Temen Desórdenes En Pueblo, Colorado," *Excelsior*, September 18, 1919, 5. "La población Adelaido José Ortiz mexicana en Pueblo Colorado y sus alrededores es bastante numerosa, y se dice que centenares de ellos han estado desfilado de ante los cadaveres de los compatriotas muertos, causandoles gran indignacion el hecho, y para evitar cualquiera represalia, se ha aumentado la vigilancia."

<sup>85</sup> "Quieren Negar Su Responsabilidad Por Los Ultimos Linchamientos Las Autoridades Yanquis de Colorado," 2; "El Linchamiento de 2 Mexicanos En Pueblo, Colorado, E. Unidos," 2; "El Linchamiento de 2 Mexicanos en Pueblo, Col.," *Excelsior*, September 10, 1919, 1.

“coarse whispers” or pantomimed their demands, “making voice recognition impossible.” The key witnesses were all policemen. Not surprisingly, Consul Ortiz publicly accused Pueblo police of collusion with the lynch mob and asked Governor Shoup to convene an investigation and issue charges against the department. Consul Ortiz also bristled at the inquest’s findings, first because the jury failed to interview anyone from the Mexican community and second because it did nothing to ascertain whether the victims of the lynching had anything to do with Evans’s death. Through extensive interviews with not only Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans but also white American citizens, Consul Ortiz became convinced that Ortez had nothing to do with the murder and Gonzales’s involvement was doubtful at best. On September 30, Consul Ortiz petitioned the jury to delay its ruling for ten days so he could submit his own evidence. Regardless, the jury found no one culpable of the lynching, infuriating both the Mexican foreign ministry and press. Long after it had become a memory north of the border, the affair lived on in Mexican press, where it was often recounted in stories of injustices Mexicans faced in the United States.<sup>86</sup>

And a legacy of injustice remained Consul Ortiz’s primary concern. On the evening of August 12, a group of Mexicans gathered for “a little party with guitar music” at a Salt Creek house. As some of the revelers returned to their homes in Bessemer early the next morning, another group of Mexicans fired on them, just feet from the Northern Avenue gate of the Minnequa Steelworks, a place crammed with bars and lunch counters. The ambush wounded several in the crowd, some of whom later died of their wounds,

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<sup>86</sup> “Coroner’s Jury Fails to Reveal Identity of Pueblo Lynchers,” *Rocky Mountain News*, September 20, 1919, 7; “Pueblo Officials Find No Clue to Mexican Lynchers,” 9; “Mex Consul Charges Police with Collusion,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 27, 1919, 1; “Investigaciones En El Linchamiento de Mexicanos En Colorado,” *Excelsior*, October 1, 1919, 2.

and instantly killed Bonifacio Vasquez. Police subsequently sought to detain José Salas and Aurelio Carilla, whom Pueblo Police Detective Baty later shot and killed for resisting arrest. As Salas awaited his September 29 trial date at the county jail, he witnessed, likely with great trepidation, as Gonzales and Ortiz left its relative safety for their inevitable doom at the city jail. Following Consul Ortiz's findings, Salas's defense attorney, D.M. Campbell, petitioned the district court on September 20 for a change of venue, arguing that Salas, a Mexican national, could not get a fair trial in Pueblo considering the recent lynchings. Following Governor Shoup's lead, Campbell specifically accused the *Chieftain* and *Pueblo Star-Journal* of fostering an environment of violence and stoking anti-Mexican sentiment in the city. The newspapers "advocated a reign of lawlessness—especially against the citizens of Old Mexico," Campbell wrote. "...[B]oth papers...have worked up such sentiment against the Old Mexicans that it would be impossible to secure a jury in this county...." Parroting Consul Ortiz, Campbell also charged that law enforcement in the city had proven itself negligent in protecting Mexican nationals, particularly Gonzales and Ortiz, and even colluded with the lynchers. District Attorney Charles B. Hughes immediately moved to have the affidavit stricken from court records for its "malicious and scandalous allegations and insinuations, reflecting upon the officers of the court, and the peace officers of the city and county of Pueblo and others." Judge James B. Park "promptly ordered the affidavit stricken," the *Chieftain* reported, "...and overruled the motion for continuance."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> "Offered Murdered Man Drink but Flask Was a Revolver," *Pueblo Chieftain*, August 12, 1919, 5; "Absence of Detective Causes Murder Trial to Be Delayed," *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 30, 1919, 3; "Court Ordered His Affidavit Stricken from the Records," *Pueblo Chieftain*, September 21, 1919, 8.

The lynchings and Pueblo's subsequent lack of a response to them altered the city's relationship with the rest of the state, irreparably enlarging the gulf that would become the Tortilla Curtain. Colorado Springs, standing solidly behind its native son, Governor Shoup, openly criticized its sister city. In an unusually strongly worded editorial, the *Gazette* excoriated Pueblo. "The news from Pueblo is disgraceful, not only to the city, but to the State," contended Manitou Alfred Ege, managing editor:

...[T]he Pueblo mob is without the slightest excuse. The men acted in cold blood. The crime was not one to arouse hot anger or passion.... The men who made up the lynching party acted coolly, deliberately, methodically. Their crime was greater than the one which prompted it.<sup>88</sup>

The attitude could not have been more different in Pueblo, where many citizens were either indifferent or openly praised the lynchings. "As a matter of fact, no arrests are expected by any one, for the short shrift given the two murders is generally condoned thruout [sic] the city," observed the *Denver Post*. "Only a few persons so far have been heard to express regret at mob violence."<sup>89</sup>

### **Floods and Hoods**

In the end, however, a force more powerful than any individual or mob could ever muster ultimately squelched the most violent period in Pueblo's history. It seemed like biblical retribution. On the evening of June 3, 1921, following days of heavy rain, massive cloudbursts upstream on the Arkansas River and on Fountain Creek drove an epic wall of water right into the center of Pueblo (Figure 3.10). Low-lying neighborhoods flooded immediately, and eventually the city's piecemeal and long-neglected system of

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<sup>88</sup> Manitou Alfred Ege, "To the Disgrace of Pueblo," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, September 15, 1919, 4.

<sup>89</sup> "Lynching of Two Mexicans Generally Upheld in Pueblo," 2.

levees failed catastrophically. By morning, the raging waters heavily damaged much of downtown. The torrent twisted railroad tracks like spaghetti and left freight cars lying in the middle of streets or smashed into buildings. Flooding devastated Peppersauce Bottoms, the Lower East Side, and Salt Creek. The deluged obliterated the Grove, forcing most of the city's Slovenians to resettle to the south in the higher Bojon Town neighborhood. In all, the flood covered 300 square miles in mud, destroyed 600 houses, and killed at least 100 Puebloans, perhaps as many as 250; many of the dead washed miles downstream and were never recovered. It was the worst disaster in the city's history and among the worst in the history of Colorado.<sup>90</sup>

And the flood wiped clean many of the spaces of racial violence from the

Figure 3.10. Downtown Pueblo in the wake of the 1921 flood. City Hall remained intact (at center right), becoming a beacon of hope for the struggling city. City of Pueblo.



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<sup>90</sup> Dodds, *Pueblo: A Pictorial History*, 152–61; Anthony Settiani, “1921 Flood: ‘Katrina of the Day,’” *Pueblo Chieftain*, July 13, 2013.

previous two decades. The deluge washed away the span of the Fourth Street Bridge from which Gonzales and Ortiz had met their demise less than two years earlier. Yet rising dramatically from the devastation was the new City Hall. Damaged but largely intact, the building became a symbol of hope in the days and weeks that followed (Figure 3.10). Among white Puebloans, Governor Shoup transformed from the ultimate villain into a mythical hero as he adroitly led the herculean recovery effort and led Pueblo into a new era of prosperity.<sup>91</sup>

Yet while the flood may have drenched racial violence in Pueblo, the heated rhetoric lingered into the middle of the decade. In 1920, with its pledge of “one hundred per cent Americanism” the Ku Klux Klan emerged in Colorado and rocketed to the pinnacle of state politics with startling swiftness. Despite substantial opposition, Klan-backed Denver mayoral candidate Benjamin F. Stapleton won the 1923 election handily, with seventy percent of votes cast in his favor. He then appointed prominent Klan members to several high posts. In November 1924 Klan members and their supporters swept the state elections, winning both U.S. Senate seats, governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, auditor, and Supreme Court justice. “The leaders of the Klan could well believe they owned the state,” observed Colorado historians Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and David McComb. At his inaugural address, Governor Clarence J. Morely promised to exclude alien residents from the state and ban the use of intoxicating liquors for sacramental purposes. Both measures defined the purpose and

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

object of the Klan's discrimination in Colorado: Roman Catholics, specifically Mexican mine and mill workers.<sup>92</sup>

South of what would become the Tortilla Curtain, especially in the coalfields and mining towns ripped apart in the years before and after Ludlow, the KKK stubbornly persisted. The Klan grew particularly powerful in Fremont County, immediately west of Pueblo County and home to numerous CF&I coal mines. Middle-class Protestants lashed out against the growing population of poor Roman Catholic mine workers, particularly Mexicans and Italians, and even threatened the venerable Benedictine monastery in Cañon City, the KKK's undisputed power base. At issue was citizenship and foreignness. The Klan perceived Catholics as avowed subjects of the Pope and therefore alien residents in the United States. In Pueblo "thousands donned sheets," and the organization remained strong in Walsenburg and Trinidad, the other major towns in southern Colorado's coal belt.<sup>93</sup>

Somewhat counter-intuitively, the Invisible Empire struggled to gain a foothold in affluent and nearly all-white Colorado Springs, one of the few places in the state in which it never succeeded. By attacking religion rather than race, Colorado Klan leadership hoped to whitewash past violence against Mexicans in Pueblo and win the favor—and financial backing—of Protestant elites in Colorado Springs, the same elites who had found the violence south of the Tortilla Curtain so disdainful in the first place. The Klan

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<sup>92</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915–1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 19, 22, 222, 228; Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and David McComb, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 3rd ed. (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1994), 285–285; Robert A. Goldberg, "Denver: Queen City of the Colorado Realm," in *The Invisible Empire in the West: Toward a New Historical Appraisal of the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s*, ed. Shawn Lay (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 47–49, 56.

<sup>93</sup> Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, *Colorado*, 286–87.



certainly labored hard to increase its power in the city, sometimes spectacularly so. Beyond the usual membership drives, church sermons, and pamphlet drops, leaders of the KKK erected a gigantic burning cross on Pikes Peak, at the 14,114-foot summit of “America’s Mountain.” Nonetheless the Klan failed in its attempts to attract a large following in Colorado Springs, luring only a small group of poorer whites from the city’s more industrial west and east sides. “As Denver, Pueblo, Grand Junction, Canon City and scores of other towns and cities succumbed to the Klan,” observed journalist Ed Quillen, “only one major city escaped: Colorado Springs.”<sup>94</sup>

As historian Kenneth T. Jackson points out, it was precisely the racial, cultural, and economic differences between Pueblo and Colorado Springs that explained why the Klan found power south of the Tortilla Curtain just as it struggled in the much whiter city immediately north of it. Forged in the same upheaval that tore apart Pueblo following World War I, “...the Ku Klux Klan merely awakened smoldering prejudices by capitalizing upon white Protestant fear of Catholicism, Judaism, and racial amalgamation.” In Pueblo, the organization found everything it despised and thrived upon. The city was home to a large population of immigrants, many of whom were either Roman Catholics or Jews, and considered other than white. The Klan’s calculus was simple: Catholics were not Americans. Thus places like Pueblo were utterly foreign lands, playing into the older narrative that Pueblo was an extraterritorial Mexican city. Moreover, Jackson argues that the Invisible Empire of the 1920s was largely a working-class movement that held little interest for affluent whites. It thrived in cities with heavy industries but

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<sup>94</sup> Ed Quillen, “Welcome to Kolorado, Klan Kountry,” *Colorado Springs Independent*, May 22, 2003, <http://www.csindy.com/coloradosprings/welcome-to-kolorado-klan-kountry/Content?oid=1119033>.

floundered in Colorado Springs, where manufacturing was rare. “The evidence indicates that in the city the secret order was a lower-middle-class movement,” Jackson writes. “The greatest source of Klan support came from rank and file non-union, blue-collar employees of large businesses and factories.”<sup>95</sup>

The Klan’s demise in the state came as quickly as its rise, largely abandoned by 1926. It died out in Colorado and the West not because its purpose was counter to popular sentiments but because it was “extraneous to this task,” Richard White argues. “The dual labor system had existed before the Klan and continued to exist afterwards.”<sup>96</sup> Moreover, the ideology of the organization provided little initiative for actually governing the state and its cities. As Abbott, Leonard, and McComb conclude, “the Invisible Empire found it hard to translate fear into legislation.”<sup>97</sup>

Regardless, the legacy of violence in Pueblo, particularly the Gonzales-Ortez lynching, only fortified an Anglo idea that had lingered from the earliest days of the settlement: that this was a foreign palace, a mysterious pocket of old Mexico stuck in American territory. Among the most popular Pueblo postcards from the period were photographs of the Goat Hill neighborhood, which printers captioned “Old Mexico” (Figure 3.11 and Figure 3.12). Yet when photographers took the photos, many, if not most, of the residents were Italians. At the same time much of the state, led by elite intellectuals in Colorado Springs, distanced itself from Colorado’s second city, deepening a divide that had existed on the old labor-leisure boundary from the nineteenth century. In

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<sup>95</sup> Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915–1930*, 20, 240–41.

<sup>96</sup> Richard White, “*It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own*,” *A New History of the American West* (Norman, Ok.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 384.

<sup>97</sup> Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, *Colorado*, 286–87.

the coming decades, federal projects would literally cement these perceived cultural differences in stone.



Figure 3.11. This circa 1920 postcard of Old Mexico was one of the most popular the Hyde Paper Company, in Pueblo, printed. Postcard from the author's collection.



Figure 3.12. Popular depictions of Pueblo's "Old Mexico" may have influenced the Works Progress Administration vernacular in the city. See chapter four. Postcard from the author's collection.

## CHAPTER 4

### “USED THE PRESENT DAY FOR THE EPILOGUE:” REGIONALISM, MODERNISM, AND THE NEW DEAL

On December 5, 1938, residents of Colorado Springs reached into their mailboxes to find an anonymous, typewritten postcard. Materially it was really quite small, but its words helped fan the flames of a fire that had been smoldering in the city for years: the fate of the venerable, old Colorado Springs High School.<sup>1</sup> Deeper still it reflected a growing divide between preserving a remnant of the city’s past or engaging in a new, national sense of the modern.<sup>2</sup>

Growing resentment against wrecking our grand old high school merits the hope citizens will demand it be saved. Facts known to contractors are the building is not in dangerous condition.... No need for desperate hurry to wreck this building. A short delay to allow a report by an impartial engineer will harm no one. Cost little, prove much. Call board members. Call friends. Don’t spend years of regret in uselessly losing one of Colorado Springs’ four outstanding buildings, cherished by thousands. Let the old tower clock continue to run.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this chapter previously appeared in Adam Thomas, “Regret and Redemption: A Half-Century of the National Historic Preservation Act in Colorado,” *Colorado Heritage*, June 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this chapter I use “modern,” “modernism,” and “modernist,” in the sense of a specific design aesthetic. In general, modern design emerged in the United States after 1900 and included several design styles with at least three common attributes. First, modern design aesthetics tend to be comprehensive, encompassing all aspects of design, including architecture, landscaping, interior decoration, etc. Second, modern design generally lacks a clear historic precedent. Third, modern design is minimalist, promoting function, structure, and form over surface ornamentation.

<sup>3</sup> “Crew of 55 Begin Wrecking Old High School Building; Crowds Attracted by Work,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, December 6, 1938, 3.



Figure 4.1. Old Colorado Springs High School, circa 1893–1897. Denver Public Library, Western History Collection, X-14344.

Opened for classes in January 1893, Colorado Springs High School (Figure 4.1) was exquisite. Like most of the prominent public buildings in Colorado Springs, the high school conveyed a sense of permanence and sophistication while embracing the city's spectacular setting. It provided an effective means to express the Gilded Age philanthropy of its residents. Indeed, when a fire destroyed the city's original 1875 high school, on January 13, 1890, the *Colorado Springs Gazette* did not mourn the passing of one of the last buildings left from the city's pioneer era. Instead, it welcomed the catastrophe as it cleared the way to build a school more reflective of the city's skyrocketing affluence. "Although the building burned was public property, not a great deal of regret was expressed at the disaster by the citizens," the newspaper reported. "The progress of the schools may be retarded for a short time, but a better building will be the

result. ...Now with the old building out of the way the city can have one of the finest High school buildings in the country.”<sup>4</sup>

While boasts were common in newspapers in cities and towns across the United States, this “Newport in the Rockies” meant it; the cheerleading of the local newspaper was not hyperbole. The new high school occupied a prominent triangular lot along North Nevada Avenue, one of the city’s principal north-south thoroughfares, between East Platte Avenue and East Boulder Street. The heavy, brooding Romanesque façade appeared impenetrable, a veritable citadel of enlightenment. Breaking up the walls of rusticated sandstone and smooth brick were generous, round arch windows, appearing in a wild assortment of towers and turrets. Dominating the façade was an immense, 134-foot clock tower. While the architecture itself was castle-like, the architect made every effort to ensure that “the Colorado air and sunshine have free and unobstructed access.” Piercing the soaring roof surfaces were ample skylights. Most notable was a large, arcaded loggia spanning the south elevation, an indoor-outdoor space similar to the wide verandas of the Antlers Hotel downtown or the sleeping porches at Cragmor Sanatorium to the north.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the durability the building’s architecture conveyed, it failed to keep pace with the city’s growing population and evolving pedagogy, forcing the district to construct a rather tacky hodgepodge of additions and unconnected annexes. Consumed with building additional schools as the population spread outward from downtown, the

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<sup>4</sup> “Work of the Flames,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, January 14, 1890, 1.

<sup>5</sup> G. B. Turnbull, “The New High School Building at Colorado Springs,” *The School Review* 1, no. 10 (1893): 682; Linda Barber, *Changing, 1879-1979: Colorado Springs, Palmer High School* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: s.n., 1979), 22; “Survey of School Building Finished,” *Colorado Springs Sunday Gazette & Telegraph*, June 5, 1938, 1.

school board neglected maintenance at Colorado Springs High School for decades. By the 1930s, mechanical system failures were common; paint peeled, stone and brick crumbled. Reportedly, at a baccalaureate service around 1930, a skylight in the auditorium fell from its frame, striking a woman and smashing glass all over the floor. Fortunately she was not hurt.<sup>6</sup>

In the mid 1930s, the high school issue had become increasingly fractious. A group connected to the city's old money saw the building as a timeless monument to their progenitors' blue-blooded philanthropy and urged remodeling rather than demolition. But the recent experience of cleaning up the city's Monument Valley Park, following a devastating flood in 1935, suggested to city officials and the school board a new source of capital for civic improvements: the federal government. In the spring of 1938 a group of businessmen, at the behest of the school board, hired Burns & McDonnell, a Kansas City engineering firm, to assess the condition of the high school. Their findings were dismal but not catastrophic. Nonetheless, administrators recommended condemning the building immediately and sought to prepare plans and specifications for a replacement as soon as possible. The preservation group saw the school board's haste as an attempt to thwart their efforts. But the real reason was the federal grants cycle. The Public Works Administration (PWA) set an August 31 deadline, a little over three months away, for submitting applications for a forty-five-percent grant. More pressing, Colorado Springs officials found out that the Denver school board planned to ask for \$5 million in funds for a gigantic project that included twenty-four new buildings and additions. The project could single-handedly consume the state's entire allotment of federal grant funds.

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<sup>6</sup> Barber, *Changing, 1879-1979*, 22.



In the end, the school board decided to build a new school not necessarily because the old one was beyond repair but because a federal grant would pay for it. “PWA is giving people more dollar-for-dollar value than they could get elsewhere,” argued Denver architect Temple H. Buell at a July 26 meeting of the Colorado Springs school board. Moreover, the board had to act immediately because, as Buell pointed out, the cost of construction had been rising at the same time the demise of the PWA seemed likely. In the end, the school board submitted to the PWA plans and specifications for a new high school costing \$628,020, thus amounting to a grant of \$282,609.<sup>7</sup> The Works Progress Administration (WPA) even covered the costs of demolishing the old high school as a way of creating several temporary jobs.<sup>8</sup>

Then again, the issue may not have been a matter of haste but rather taste. As *The Colorado Springs Business Journal* speculated, “School administrators declared the previous building structurally unsound, but they may have been motivated by the allure of a modern, efficient, and roomy new school.”<sup>9</sup> What architect Burnham Hoyt envisioned for the new Colorado Springs High School (Figure 4.2) was a stunning vision of modernism that earned him and the project international fame in the pages of *The Architectural Forum*.

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<sup>7</sup> “Time Is Short to Get Grant for Building,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, June 26, 1938, 1, 8; “Board Going Ahead on New High School,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, July 27, 1938, 1, 3; “School Board Asks for Federal Grant for New Building,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, August 4, 1938, 1.

<sup>8</sup> “WPA Project to Raze High School Thru,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, October 13, 1938, 1; “Work on New High School Started Soon,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, October 19, 1938, 1.

<sup>9</sup> “Area’s Best Work: Choices by the Decades,” *The Colorado Springs Business Journal*, (December 11, 2014), <http://www.csbj.com/2014/12/11/areas-best-work-choices-by-the-decades/>.

This chapter investigates the convergence of regionalism, modernism, and the expansion of the federal government during the Great Depression, within the context of the West and its built environment. It ties together themes from the first three chapters, revealing how the rhetorical landscape of the nineteenth century and the later labor-



Figure 4.2. Colorado Springs High School shortly after its completion in 1941. Photo from the author's collection.

leisure divide between Pueblo and Colorado Springs helped inform federal spending in the New Deal. Underlying it all were preconceptions of race that emerged from the upheaval in Pueblo and the relative calm in Colorado Springs from the turn of the twentieth century through the 1920s. This chapter seeks to add to the literature by examining the underlying meanings behind stylistic choices that either connected to the regionalists, through historicism, or to the expanding federal government, through

modernism. In particular, I will show that the federal government's intervention in the built environment during the Great Depression, predicated on these notions of regionalism and modernism, helped create, or at least reinforce, regional boundaries with distinctive architectural vernaculars.<sup>10</sup> These design choices both confirmed and further delimited inequities in power, particularly in terms of race and class. Through the New Deal, the federal government accepted the myths that had created the regional divide of the Tortilla Curtain and manifested those differences in the built environment.

Modernism was the New Deal's most recognizable architectural vernacular, bringing a stark vision of the future to cities and towns across the United States. In many rural areas, PWA- and WPA-constructed buildings were the first and often only examples of modern architectural styles. Indeed, many State Historic Preservation Offices recognize a distinctive WPA modern style—a very minimalist interpretation of the Art Deco or early International style—because nearly every town has a high school, or post office, or civic auditorium, or band shell, or bathhouse in the style. As historian Gabrielle Esperdy argues, modern architecture had a particularly poignant appeal during the Great Depression. The new architectural vernacular “offered a striking counterpoint, an image of modernity that was deliberately at odds with the dismal present because it symbolized a hopeful future.”<sup>11</sup> As Esperdy points out, the New Deal's Federal Housing Administration even promoted a “Modernize Main Street” program to remodel

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<sup>10</sup> Throughout this chapter I define “vernacular” as a distinctive architectural style derived from perceived regional building traditions rather than as architecture not designed by architects.

<sup>11</sup> Gabrielle M. Esperdy, *Modernizing Main Street: Architecture and Consumer Culture in the New Deal*, Center Books on American Places (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 3.

downtown storefronts in modernist styles to stimulate investment in the construction, manufacturing, and local retail sectors.<sup>12</sup>

Modern architecture was a fundamental symbol of success in the New Deal's war on the Depression and of an expanding national mass culture. "On Main Streets where breadlines and forgotten men were all too familiar, [modern-style] storefronts offered a striking counterpoint, an image of modernity that was deliberately at odds with the dismal present because it symbolized a hopeful future."<sup>13</sup> Modern buildings "...heralded the New Deal's vaunted return to posterity as the forms quickly became identified with progress, optimism, and an all-consuming national quest 'to be modern.'"<sup>14</sup> That national quest had simmered since the end of World War I when architects promised a more perfect future freed from the failures and horrors of the past. Modernism captured the jazz age exuberance of the 1920s and provided visions of futuristic utopias at the 1933–34 Chicago World's Fair and the 1939–40 New York World's Fair.

Modern architecture reflected the larger social and cultural goals of the New Deal and, more profoundly, legitimized the unprecedented expansion in the size and power of the federal government and the national culture it disseminated, particularly at the local level. As banker, economist, and later Federal Reserve Chairman Marriner Stoddard Eccles testified before the United States Senate in 1933, New Deal building projects served three purposes: they provided housing, generated jobs, and as a result of the first two objectives, stymied revolution.<sup>15</sup> In her comparison of the government-built

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>15</sup> Diane Ghirardo, *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Architecture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 14.

resettlement communities of the American New Deal to those of fascist Italy, architect Diane Ghirardo argues that the architectural styles were not merely incidental. "...I would claim that any government architecture has a rhetorical function and, further, that it tells us what the regime wants us to believe about its nature," she writes. "...In both the public buildings and the new communities the two regimes created, they projected ideal images of sites for human habitation and communal life—ideal cities, in short."<sup>16</sup>

At the heart of these projects was the legitimacy of the government and control of its citizens. Buildings provided convincing evidence that, whatever the shortcomings of infrastructure improvements and make-work programs, progress was undeniable. "When the Public Works Administration (PWA) or the Works Progress Administration (WPA) erected a new school, city hall, or armory in a community, it testified in an eminently visible fashion to the involvement of the federal government in the life of the community," Ghirardo writes. "New schools, auditoriums, swimming pools, sewage treatment plants, post offices, and local, state, and federal office buildings all stood as vivid reminders of the Roosevelt Administration's dynamism and, by extension, the sturdiness of the nation. And the public did notice."<sup>17</sup>

So if federally funded architecture, particularly modern architecture, carried such profound rhetorical value, what did it mean when the PWA or WPA forwent modern architecture in favor of historicist styles? What if instead of signaling "a hopeful future," New Deal make-work programs looked to the past, sometimes the very distant past? Across Colorado the PWA, WPA, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and the rest of New Deal's alphabet soup constructed many of the icons that would come to define the

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 9–10.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 19.

state in the second half of the twentieth century: Rocky Mountain National Park's Trail Ridge Road, the highest continuously paved road in the western hemisphere; the enormous Colorado-Big Thompson Project that diverted west-slope water to the thirsty cities of the Front Range and made suburban expansion possible; and the iconic Red Rocks Amphitheater, a marriage of spectacular natural setting with soaring modernism designed by Burnham Hoyt, the same architect of Colorado Springs High School. Yet south of the Tortilla Curtain, federal make-work programs tended to construct what they considered the local vernacular: a minimalist version of the Pueblo Revival style. Instead of glass and steel, these buildings consisted of adobe or stone; low, rectangular boxes; stuccoed walls; flat roofs; and parapets with protruding *vigas* (log rafter ends) and *canales* (wood, metal, or ceramic roof gutters). North of the Tortilla Curtain New Dealers looked to the future; to the south they looked to the past, constructing buildings based on the region's assumed cultural traditions.

Regionalism was a reaction against industrialization, urbanization, and immigration that began in the late nineteenth century and coalesced after World War I. At its core was a concern about "one of the most remarkable and insidious inventions of the new urban-industrial America: mass culture."<sup>18</sup> Regionalists saw the cultural-geographic diversity of the continent as the main reason for the exceptionalism of the United States. The preservation of regional tradition was, then, an act of preserving the republic itself. Thus arose a "generation of writers in the 1920s and 1930s who sought to identify and

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<sup>18</sup>For example, see Robert L. Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920–1945* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 291–303.

preserve the distinctive character of American regions.”<sup>19</sup> Many historians have tied regionalization to the New Deal as a well-organized and well-funded tool to push the regionalist agenda. But few have reconciled it with the New Deal’s seemingly contradictory push for modernity, both stylistically and metaphorically, as the federal programs remade regional identities.<sup>20</sup>

This is not to say the regionalists and modernists were antithetical. As historian Robert L. Dorman notes, the most fervent generation of regionalists and the modernists both arose from the cultural crisis of World War I, particularly the rise of consumer capitalism and mass culture. “Regionalists would, in sum, join this interwar modernist generation in the search for a new *integrated* culture and society,” Dorman writes. “But if they were to share many modernist goals and assumptions, they often did so ambivalently, on their own terms and according to their own distinctive cultural and political agendas.”<sup>21</sup> This contradiction was not limited to intellectuals and cultural brokers. Historian Lizbeth Cohen points out that immigrants during the New Deal often participated in American mass culture by acquiring the popular, new technology of phonographs. Yet they often purchased foreign-language records to play on their new phonographs. Radio stations similarly catered to specific ethnic groups rather than some homogenized mass culture, hosting “nationality hours.”<sup>22</sup> Modernists tended to embrace mass culture, looked to the future, and used industrialization and urbanization as

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<sup>19</sup> David Glassberg, “Place and Placelessness in American History,” in *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*, by David Glassberg (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 119–20.

<sup>20</sup> Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>22</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 105, 135.

inspiration for their designs. Regionalists retreated into supposed folk traditions, or at least Anglicized versions of those traditions.

Nowhere were the effects of this convergence of regionalism, modernism, and the New Deal more apparent than in the West. Indeed, looming over the regionalists was historian Frederick Jackson Turner and his 1893 thesis on the significance of the frontier in American history. The thesis was “... ‘a bit of sectional rationalization,’ yet it was also the most compelling synthetic vision of regional history and national myth ever written, as well as the most convincing case for American exceptionalism.”<sup>23</sup> Connections between the myths of the West and the New Deal were quite explicit. As historian David Hamilton Murdoch points out, New Dealers often justified the expansion of the liberal state in terms of Turner’s concept of the closing of the frontier. For instance, in his 1931 inaugural address Wisconsin Governor Philip La Follette “argued that, with the frontier gone ‘we must find our freedom and make our opportunity through wise and courageous readjustments of the political and economic order of State and Nation,’” Murdoch notes, as he later quotes President Franklin Roosevelt expressing a similar sentiment: “Our last frontier has long been reached. There is no safety-valve in the form of a western prairie.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover the environmental exigencies of the Dust Bowl proved that the West, particularly the West of the high plains, was decidedly different than the rest of the United States. The environmental disaster just compounded economic problems, particularly in agricultural sectors, that had dogged the West since the end of World War I. As well, Roosevelt was slow to turn his attention to the West, further compounding

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<sup>23</sup> Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> David Hamilton Murdoch, *The American West: The Invention of a Myth* (Cardiff, UK: Welsh Academic Press, 2001), 104.



problems he sought to relieve in the East. “The question at once arises as to whether westerners experienced problems that differed greatly from those that were besetting people all across America,” Western historian Robert Athearn posits. “The answer is a qualified yes.”<sup>25</sup>

This convergence of regionalism, modernism, and the expansion of the federal government realigned Colorado and fortified the Tortilla Curtain even further. As geographer William Wyckoff put it “Overall the tumultuous 1920s and 1930s as well as the ambitious national response to the Great Depression altered Colorado’s human geography in lasting ways and hinted at how a new mix of capitalism and federal largess would continue to remake the American scene in subsequent decades.” Conversely, just as Colorado was becoming more national, sharing in the same federal programs and same mass consumer culture, it was growing more provincial, tearing apart into various Wests: the West of the Great Plains, the Southwest, and the Rocky Mountain West. “Just as Colorado was shaped by national, even global forces...other more regionally based trends molded Colorado’s human geography and linked the state more closely with its neighbors.”<sup>26</sup>

Colorado is a particularly fruitful geography for understanding the impact of the New Deal. As historian James Wickens argues, because of the state’s unique combination of geography and economy it received nearly the full complement of New Deal programs, including the CCC in the mountains; Dust Bowl abatement on the plains; water

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<sup>25</sup> Robert G. Athearn, *The Mythic West in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 95.

<sup>26</sup> William Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado: The Making of a Western American Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), ix, 259, 268.

reclamation between the mountains and plains; investments in urban infrastructure in Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and Denver; and improvements to heavy industries.<sup>27</sup>

Ultimately, the sheer volume and size of federal investment in the West during the New Deal invariably altered its built environment and changed perceptions of place. As Athearn points out:

The so-called puttering around that the New Deal did both with the dust bowl proper and with western agricultural lands in general, as well as with water, time, and human beings, was so extensive that it may well have left its footprints on the region more clearly and for a longer time than was the case with any other part of the country. That this relatively undeveloped region was hard hit is illustrated by its national ranking in terms of aid received. A record of those states that received the most federal funds of all types during that desperate decade places the first fourteen in the West. The region was awarded three times the national average for federal expenditures while it yielded only about one-third of that figure in locally generated revenues.<sup>28</sup>

The link between the federal government and the West during the New Deal altered power relations, legitimatizing the authority of the federal government in Western affairs; federally funded construction projects literally cemented this arrangement. Athearn equates the relationship to a drug addict and his pusher. And making the relationship possible was regionalism. “By turning up the volume of programs that were aimed at promoting regionalism, the ‘feds’ further diminished the power and local influence of the states.” Moreover, the vacuum of regional power allowed the federal government to erode at last the frontier myth and supplant it with new myths about past, present, and futures that would propel winners into the future and resign losers to the dust bin of history. “When the magnitude of this evolution finally sank into western

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<sup>27</sup> James F. Wickens, *Colorado in the Great Depression* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979), i.

<sup>28</sup> Athearn, *The Mythic West in the Twentieth Century*, 102–3.

mentalities and into the thinking of that area's admirers in the other parts of the nation, even the die-hards among the Old West fans had to admit that, indeed, the land of dreams was no more," Athearn concludes.<sup>29</sup>

New Deal agencies were actively involved in the definition and preservation of regionalism. Their efforts were most apparent in the stylistic choices they made when improving public infrastructure. For Colorado Springs, agencies either maintained the prevalent resort architecture or introduced some of the most cutting-edge modern architecture in the West. For Pueblo and Colorado south of the Tortilla Curtain, the PWA and WPA chose a style that lumped the city with New Mexico rather than with its own state. The WPA touted Pueblo Revival architecture for its projects south of the Tortilla Curtain: "Designed along Spanish lines, [WPA buildings in Pueblo] will reflect the architecture that is considered 'native' to Southern Colorado and New Mexico."<sup>30</sup>

### **New Deal Investment and Design in Colorado Springs**

The lilacs in Monument Valley Park had never been such a source of grave concern. Memorial Day 1935 was less than a week away and those bushes, the horticultural icons of European settlement in the West, had failed to bloom. The people of Colorado Springs beloved the flowers as harbingers of spring, marking the fragrant reawakening of the city's "favorite beauty spot" and "one of the most unique playgrounds in the west." With its tennis courts, baseball diamond, pool, pavilions, and lakes, it was also the city's most popular urban park and home to over 100 species of birds, "a whirring society of red-headed, lyrical house finches, blue lazuli buntings, clownish

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 103–4.

<sup>30</sup> "Stone Widely Used on Pueblo Projects," *The WPA Worker*, December 1936.

chants, and gaudy yellow Bullock's orioles and bright-blue Stellar jays." Stretching more than two miles along Monument Creek, the 166-acre Monument Valley Park (Figure 4.3) served to connect larger open spaces north of the city into the heart of the urban center. And its central location made it the foremost showplace of gold-standard philanthropy in Colorado Springs. Like most of the city's vast open spaces, Monument Valley Park was a gift to the people of Colorado Springs from the city's magnanimous founder, General William Jackson Palmer. Indeed, the park was the "capstone" of his plan to string magnificent parks around the city. From 1903 to 1907, the industrial magnate worked with engineer Edmond C. Van Diest and invested nearly half a million dollars to create a landscape of refined leisure, a "touch of New England at the foot of Pikes Peak," as local



Figure 4.3. Monument Valley Park, circa 1910, was the center of middle-class, white leisure in Colorado Springs. Postcard from the author's collection.

historian Marshall Sprague called it. “It was a sort of one-man WPA project,” observed the *Colorado Springs Gazette* in 1939. Yet the park was also part of a larger effort to distance Colorado Springs and its millionaires from the landscapes of destruction upon which they built their industrial and mining fortunes. Running parallel to the mainline of Palmer’s Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, Monument Valley Park had previously been an industrial eyesore, “a collection of rubbish and ash dumps and scrubby underbrush,” very much antithetical to the city’s glistening image as a health resort.<sup>31</sup>

In the years that followed, Palmer’s fellow Colorado Springs aristocrats further enhanced a park through their conspicuous philanthropy, extending to it the same architectural style that defined refined leisure from Cragmor Sanatorium to the Broadmoor Hote, and Palmer’s own Italian Renaissance-style Antlers Hotel, which loomed over the southeastern end of the park. Spencer Penrose, Cripple Creek mining mogul and flamboyant owner of the Broadmoor, donated the municipal pool and bathhouse. In 1916 Ethel Frizzell-Carlton donated a large bandstand with a design based on the Penrose Pool bathhouse. Her husband, Albert E. Carlton, was the so-called “King of Cripple Creek.” Coming to Colorado Springs in 1889 in search of a cure for his tuberculosis, he wound up making a fortune during the Cripple Creek gold rush. Pioneering Dutch architect Nicolaas van der Arend, who “desired to create architecture that matched the beauty of the city’s setting and climate” designed an innovative baseball stadium that landscape architect W.G. Sutherland called “one of the most artistic

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<sup>31</sup> “Lilacs in M.V. Park Were Hit by Drouth,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 23, 1935, 2; “Monument Valley Park, Palmer’s Gift to C.S. Restored by Channel Job Costing \$1,197,000 in Five Years,” *Colorado Springs Sunday Gazette & Telegraph*, July 2, 1939, sec. 2, 8; Marshall Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies: The Life and Good Times of Colorado Springs*, 4th ed., 1997 rev. (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 1987), 137, 238, 267.

structures of its kind I ever saw.” He continued, “It harmonized thoroly [sic] with the park and the nearby mountains and combines beauty to a high degree.”<sup>32</sup> Other aristocrats, working through the parks commission, donated the enormous pavilion and graceful shelter over bubbling Tahama Spring.

But even with all its accouterments of Gilded Age refinement and grace, the spring of 1935 was a dark one for Monument Valley Park. Indeed, the lack of lilac blossoms in late May represented one more in a string of environmental concerns that hinted at something quite unsettling: perhaps the climate of Colorado Springs was not as miraculous, as pure, as divine, as utterly perfect as boosters had so long proclaimed it to be. Thomas C. Kirkwood, superintendent of parks, blamed the late bloom on drought, the very same drought that killed venerable, ancient trees and saplings alike throughout the city. And even more ominous were the dust storms. On February 21, strong, unrelenting easterly winds plowed into large drifts tons and tons of topsoil from the plains of eastern Colorado and western Kansas. For days following the storm, a choking cloud of dust enveloped “the City of Sunshine” and left it covered in a layer of fine, dark silt. The situation worsened dramatically with the “Black Sunday” dust storm that consumed much of the Great Plains on April 14, 1935.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Mrs. Carlton to Build Fine Bandstand in Valley Park,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, July 26, 1916, 1; “Stadium in Monument Park Is Work of Art, Says Landscape Architect; Finished,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, July 8, 1917, 5; Thomas H. Simmons and Laurie Simmons, “National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for the Van Briggles Pottery Company, El Paso County, Colorado” (Denver, Colo.: Front Range Research Associates, 2008), 8; Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies*, 257.

<sup>33</sup> “High Wind Piles Dust Into Drifts,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, February 22, 1935, 1; “Thousands of Tons of Dust Fly Thru Air; Topsoil Torn from Eastern Colorado, Western Kansas,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, February 23, 1935, 1; “Heavy Dust Cloud Envelops Region,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, February 24, 1935, 1; “Dust Storm Left Much Silt Here,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, April 19, 1935, 12.

Yet nature's response to the problem was as environmentally epic as the drought itself. Throughout the spring, dark rain clouds formed to the west of the city, across the Front Range, yet rarely pushed eastward beyond the foothills, leaving Colorado Springs in a paradox: the rivers brimmed at their banks while the earth beyond them was parched and burnt. Then on the morning of May 29, in a situation reminiscent of Pueblo fourteen years earlier, jet-black clouds formed north of the city as powerful storm cells merged and stalled over Monument Creek. By noon, a series of at least six violent cloudbursts, the worst long-term residents had ever seen, pounded the city. Monument Creek, a rather unremarkable trickle of shallow, braided streams, transformed into a raging torrent over a half-mile wide and thirty-two feet deep. It tore houses from their foundations and pushed them hundreds of feet downstream. Debris in the raging water acted as battering rams, pushing bridges from their piers. A beloved footbridge in Monument Valley Park (Figure 4.4) remained intact throughout much of the storm until the steel hulk of a large railroad bridge truss, torn from its footers, tumbled toward the graceful span and smashed it to splinters. To add to the misery, at the height of the deluge water poured into the power station, plunging the city into darkness. In the end, the flood killed eighteen people.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "Monument Valley Park in Ruins After Raging Flood," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 31, 1935, 11; "Incoming tide—Part 1: Flood Waters Waylaid Springs in 1935," *Colorado Springs Business Journal*, April 26, 2013, <http://www.csbj.com/2013/04/26/incoming-tide-part-1-flood-waters-waylaid-springs-in-1935/>.



Figure 4.4. This rustic footbridge was one of the most beloved destinations in Monument Valley Park. During the May 29, 1935, flood, a steel railroad bridge upstream broke free from its piers and dashed the footbridge to splinters. Postcard from the author's collection.

And the lilacs in Monument Valley Park? Obliterated. "Small hillocks which had been planted with lilacs and blue spruces, were washed away as the flood surged over them," the *Gazette* lamented. "Colorado Springs' pride, beautiful Monument Valley park, last night lay in ruins, scores of its towering trees uprooted, its picturesque shrubbery washed away by yesterday's flood." And Park Superintendent Kirkwood, whose overwhelming concern just hours earlier was drought, found himself wading through acres of mud and debris that had been Colorado Springs's "favorite beauty spot." "There



is no possibility of restoring the park this year,” Kirkwood said, “and its restoration can be accomplished...only at tremendous expense.”<sup>35</sup>

As Kirkwood and other city fathers assessed the staggering damage before them, they turned to an alternative source of help in the weeks following the flood, marking a profound change in the development of Colorado Springs. Instead of pleading for charity from the city’s millionaires, they turned to the federal government. Days after the flood, seventy-five men from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), one of the initial Depression-era make-work programs established under President Herbert Hoover and expanded dramatically under Roosevelt, arrived at the park and, by mid-July, had already reopened the swimming pool and playground, cut and removed huge amounts of driftwood, and shoveled tons of mud and sand to restore some of the park’s grass and flowerbeds. By August, over a hundred men in the employment of FERA reported to Kirkwood each morning to toil in the park. And even bigger projects were on their way. Kirkwood worried that without significant modifications to Monument Creek’s channel, another flood was likely. By October 1936, the Works Progress Administration, successor to FERA, had spent \$218,366 in labor and \$80,442 in equipment and supplies to both restore the park and improve the creek channel. These combined projects represented seventy-seven percent of all WPA expenditures in Colorado Springs and were by far the largest federal disbursements in the city to that time and the largest WPA project in the entire region.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> “Monument Valley Park in Ruins After Raging Flood,” 11.

<sup>36</sup> “Rehabilitation of M.V. Park Under Way,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, July 20, 1935, 7; “Resume Rehabilitation Job in M.V. Park Today,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, August 2, 1935, 3; “M.V. Park Job to Take Years for Cleanup,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, March 8, 1936, sec. 2, sec. 2, p. 1; “WPA Projects for City Use Up \$387,707 So Far,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*,

Thus, as educators in Colorado Springs sought to build a new high school, they followed the lead of the parks and looked first to the federal government rather than to the city's millionaires. And with the New Deal's tacit approval of modern architecture, a bold, new vernacular cemented the city's partnership with the federal government, a partnership that would dramatically expand the city after World War II and transform it into an icon of modern architecture, particularly with the construction of the U.S. Air Force Academy, beginning in 1954.

That transformation began with architect Burnham Hoyt. His metamorphosis from a student of traditional and regional historicist styles into a bold pioneer of International-style minimalism paralleled many of the foremost architects of the era. Born in Denver in 1887, Hoyt initially apprenticed at the firm of Kidder and Wieger, in Denver. His older brother and mentor, Merrill Hoyt, himself a prominent Denver architect, encouraged Burnham to take a more formal course in architectural instruction. The younger Hoyt relocated to New York City, where he studied at the Beaux Arts Institute and apprenticed in the legendary firms of George Browne Post and Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Stunningly prolific and innovative, Post was nonetheless a staunch advocate of historicist styles, particularly the Beaux Arts, even as he embraced vastly advanced building materials and techniques. For instance, Post's contribution to the Court of Honor at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, in Chicago, was the gigantic Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. Post used an innovative steel structural system that made the building both the largest interior space in the world and the longest clear-span space ever

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October 25, 1936, 5; "Largest WPA Project in the Pikes Peak Region Gives Flood Protection for Colorado Springs Residents," *The WPA Worker*, December 1936.

attempted to that point. Yet the exterior decoration remained a lofty expression of the Beaux Arts, belying the technology that made it possible.<sup>37</sup>

Goodhue, on the other hand, initiated a profound shift in American architecture toward the end of his career. Perhaps even more so than Post, Goodhue, a founder of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, trained and practiced in the most traditional architectural styles, particularly high Gothic, Romanesque, and Byzantine. His many church commissions were nearly perfect replicas of European precedents, including the Cadet's Chapel, at West Point, and Manhattan's St. Thomas Church and St. Bartholomew's Church, for which Hoyt designed the interior woodwork. But Goodhue's designs became simpler and bolder in the first two decades of the twentieth century, beginning with his vision for the University of Chicago's Rockefeller Chapel (commissioned in 1918 and built between 1925 and 1928), which expressed a transition from the Gothic to the modernist Art Deco. Goodhue ultimately arrived squarely in the modern mode, particularly the Art Deco, with his designs for the Los Angeles Central Library (1924) and, ultimately, the Nebraska State Capitol (1924), an Art Deco masterpiece and foremost example of the convergence of regionalism and modernism.<sup>38</sup>

Burnham Hoyt's stylistic transformation paralleled that of his mentor, although it was far quicker and more complete. And like many of the architects of the time, war and loss fueled that transformation. Hoyt and his brother designed in the historicist mode through the 1920s, except for two years during World War I when Burnham Hoyt

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<sup>37</sup> "Portfolio of Recent Work by Burnham Hoyt," *Architectural Forum*, February 1941, 113; Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair That Changed America* (Bismarck, N.D.: Vintage, 2004), 114.

<sup>38</sup> "Bertram Goodhue," *Wikipedia*, June 27, 2016, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bertram\\_Goodhue&oldid=727265573](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bertram_Goodhue&oldid=727265573); Dorman, *Revolt of the Provinces*, 55–60.

designed camouflage for the army. Like Goodhue, Hoyt initially reveled in the high gothic, designing the interior of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s, enormous Riverside Church, in Manhattan. Like Goodhue, Hoyt found historicist architecture increasingly hollow and uninteresting, especially in the wake of World War I. Then, after the sudden death of his beloved brother and architectural partner, Merrill Hoyt, in 1933, Burnham Hoyt abandoned historicist architectural styles altogether and committed himself to a bold, new vision of the built environment, one freed from the shackles of the past. He left behind even the minimalist, highly abstract ornamentation of the Art Deco for the stark minimalism of the International Style. In February 1941, *The Architectural Forum* identified Hoyt as a pioneer in minimalism, bringing the International Style to the interior from the coasts. "Sound modern work is by no means limited to the two coastlines." A portfolio of Hoyt's work appeared alongside pioneers of minimalist modernism: Richard J. Neutra, Raphael S. Soriano, and Eliel Saarinen.<sup>39</sup>

Modern design and federal funding went hand-in-hand in Colorado Springs. Several articles in the *Colorado Springs Gazette* lauded a modernist approach for its ability to save construction costs, convey a sense of progress, and ease in expansion and modification. At the same time, they noted that federal grant terms were far better in 1938 than they had been at any other time in the New Deal's history. As one headline put it: "Plans for 'Modified Streamline' Design on Way to PWA; to Seek \$282,609 from Uncle Sam; Bond Issue Less Than Half of 1933's." In short, because of federal funds, it made more sense to tear down the old Colorado Springs High School than it was to

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<sup>39</sup> Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation, "Colorado Architects Biographical Sketches: Hoyt, Burnham F.," January 2, 2004, 1–2; "Portfolio of Recent Work," 1.

restore it. Hoyt successfully convinced the school board to spend more than they had initially budgeted simply because the federal government would float the difference, urging them to “keep on the high side” in their grant application. Colorado Springs City Manager Earl L. Mosley told a gathering of 600 citizens interested in the building and funding plans that the PWA grant had “no catch in it.” The city and school board planned to ask for a \$282,609 grant from the PWA to help cover the estimated \$500,000 construction cost. If the city and district used the money for a new high school, the grant “will not have to be repaid,” as Mosely put it, “There are absolutely no strings to such a grant.”<sup>40</sup>

For Colorado Springs, Hoyt proposed “the ultimate” in school design, a vision of the highly minimalist International style that would become the first pure example of modern architecture in the city, although citizens had a few examples to whet their appetites. Most notable was architect John Gaw Meem’s 1936 Fine Arts Center, which combined the Art Deco style with a very minimalist interpretation of the Pueblo Revival. (Art Deco often adopted Native American and Mesoamerican design elements.) Meem himself endorsed a combined regionalist and modernist design aesthetic as not only appropriate for Colorado Springs, what he called “a modern town,” but also as the only true American architectural style. “It was decided, therefore, the building must be modern in its design, but its masses and simplicity should suggest a regional architecture,” Meem said. “The result we felt should be a truly American building.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> “School Board Asks for Federal Grant for New Building,” 1, 6; “New High School Building Plans Explained to 600,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, August 4, 1938, 1, 3; “Hoyt Is Engaged by School Board,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, July 29, 1938, 1, 9.

<sup>41</sup> Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, “Home-Fine Arts Center,” *Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center*, accessed September 5, 2016, <http://www.csfineartscenter.org/>; Bainbridge Bunting, *John*

Hoyt went a step further than Meem, taking the overall form of the old Colorado Springs High School, stripping it of all ornamentation, and arriving at something entirely unexpected and brazenly new. Hoyt even recast the massive clock tower, the icon of the pro-preservation faction, in stark minimalism, a monolith of brick framing a shaft of glass blocks. The architect moved the clock itself from the face of the shaft to a position teetering on the corner; he even dispatched with the frivolity of numerals. As Hoyt told *The Architectural Forum*, “Architecture is simply a dramatization of a system of construction.” Hoyt’s design was not the only “modern” feature of the new school; the architect also heavily promoted the use of new, synthetic building materials (Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6), which boosters subsequently equated with progress. Indeed, the *Gazette* proudly reported that the only wood floor in the entire school would be the stage. Otherwise the floors were asphalt tile and poured terrazzo. The walls consisted of salt-glazed concrete blocks or were covered in a salt-glazed concrete tile. Making up the ceilings were one-inch “industrial cork” acoustic tiles.<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps no other material better represented modern architecture and yet adapted well to the legendary sunshine of Colorado Springs than glass block, one of the most notable features of the International style. The new school used an enormous amount of glass blocks both to capture a sense of the modern and to take advantage of Colorado Springs’s lauded sunshine. A reporter from the *Gazette* visited the worksite with C.D.

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*Gaw Meem* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 152–153, quoted in Robert Allen Nauman, *On the Wings of Modernism: The United States Air Force Academy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 51.

<sup>42</sup> “Portfolio of Recent Work,” 113; “Changes in Plans Improve School,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, January 22, 1939, 6; “Rooms of New High School, 54 Per Cent Finished, Are ‘Light as Day,’” *Colorado Springs Sunday Gazette & Telegraph*, October 22, 1939, 14; “New High School Interiors,” *Colorado Springs Sunday Gazette & Telegraph*, January 14, 1940, sec. 2, 1.

Voris, resident engineer for the WPA, to assess the school's progress. "He sees the great panel of windows that are to be so decorated with glass block, diffused light streaming through," the reporter observed in an account that could have described Cragmor Sanatorium a generation earlier. "Corridors, classrooms, the large cafeteria are as light as day, wide open in the effect that give as of the out-of-doors." In some cases, the design of the new high school explicitly connected itself to Colorado Springs's resorts. Many observers referred to the roof-top garden, flanking the glass-lined cafeteria, as a "promenade deck."<sup>43</sup>

Despite the revolutionary nature of the school's design and rather profound replacement of private philanthropy with federal money, the writer of the postcards protesting the loss of the old building was one of the very few voices of dissent. The *Gazette* hinted of an initial backlash against Hoyt's bold design. "Many controversies raged over the building's modern design and the new barrel-hoop clock," the paper reported at the opening of the new building, "but now that the general effect can be seen these criticisms are dropping off and the community is happy over its investment." Yet no derogatory comments appear in its pages. Moreover, even knowing the school board planned to raze the staid, old building and replace it with a modernist structure, voters still approved a bond issue, to cover the costs beyond the PWA grant, voting three-to-one in favor of the measure.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> "Changes in Plans Improve School," 6; "Rooms of New High School, 54 Per Cent Finished, Are 'Light as Day,'" 14; "New High School Interiors," 1.

<sup>44</sup> "Mr. and Mrs. Colorado Springs, Your New High School!," *Colorado Springs Sunday Gazette & Telegraph*, May 12, 1940, sec. 2, 1; "Work on New High School Started Soon," 8.



Figure 4.5. Hallway of Colorado Springs High School, circa 1941. Photo from the author's collection.



Figure 4.6. Library of Colorado Springs High School, circa 1941. Photo from the author's collection.

At the new high school's dedication ceremony, several speakers identified Colorado Springs High School's modern architectural style as proof of a wise investment of public money, of an unabashed embrace of the future rather than a rehashing of the past, and as a definitive statement of the public good. Dr. George C. Shivers, president of the board of education, suggested "the American public school system, as exemplified in the structure, was carrying out the ideals of the founders of the democracy—a public school system for all." Dr. Ethan Allen Cross, of the Colorado State College of Education, in Greeley, provided the keynote address and, again, praised the building as "a good investment." "You have a right to expect a continuous procession of young people going thru [sic] it (the school) year by year to the year 2000, each one to become an intelligent, good citizen in this democracy, and each having had the opportunity to acquire the best education for him as an individual in the direction of his natural ability and inclination and up to his capacity to learn and profit by." Yet a certain murkiness pervaded Dr.



Cross's comments, particularly in identifying which students were part of the future. That same murkiness tainted the legacy of modern architecture in the United States. As a guide to the dedication ceremony pointed out, black residents would have a separate school tour, dedication, and musical performance, sponsored by the NAACP, the following day. "It is for the group only," the *Gazette* pointed out. "These people will be conducted thru [sic] the building by colored student guides."<sup>45</sup>

Despite its initial success, a negative appraisal of Hoyt's bold design lingered for decades, revealing a deep and growing chasm between the architectural avant-garde and the everyday users of modernist buildings. In a review of the Colorado Springs Pioneer Museum's exhibit, *Double Vision: A Century of Change in the Pikes Peak Region*, John Hazelhurst takes on Hoyt's design compared to the old Colorado Springs High School. The author refers to the 1940 building as a "modernist pile of bricks." "It's hard to imagine going to high school in a building as outrageously magnificent as the original CSHS must have been," he writes. "I can tell you from personal experience that its successor was (and, I suspect, still is) sterile, depressing and cheerless."<sup>46</sup>

### **Pueblo, Migrants, Dust, and the Militarization of the Southern Border**

The Great Depression affected Pueblo more profoundly than any of Colorado's other major cities. First, Pueblo's largest employer, the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's Minnequa Steelworks, suffered as demand for steel collapsed. CF&I entered 1930

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<sup>45</sup> "New Senior High School Is Officially Dedicated," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 28, 1940, 1, 6.

<sup>46</sup> John Hazelhurst, "That Was Then, This Is Now," *Colorado Springs Independent*, accessed January 1, 2016, <http://www.csindy.com/coloradosprings/that-was-then-this-is-now/Content?oid=1110409>.

hopeful as it expanded and modernized its bolt and spike plants, constructed a facility to manufacture grader blades, and built dozens of new coke ovens. In October, a larger order for rail allowed the Minnequa Steelworks to operate at capacity for the first time in several months. Yet as early as 1931, executives ordered a ten-percent wage reduction that would affect 2,500 steelworkers in Pueblo. The situation was becoming dire. As CF&I President Arthur Roeder put it: “We will have to do one thing or the other—either follow suit or go out of business.” Orders fell as unsold inventories grew. Customers increasingly failed to make payments. In 1933, the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company entered receivership and laid off hundreds of steelworkers in Pueblo. It reemerged in 1936 as the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation but demand for steel remained anemic until World War II. In 1935, one of Pueblo’s other huge employers, the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, also entered receivership.

Compounding the misery, by 1937 Pueblo’s mild climate and prominent place on the national railroad and early highway networks lured families of unemployed migrants from the Midwest and, especially, the Southwest, seeking refuge in the city’s many shuttered factories and smelters as well as in abandoned coke ovens. When members of the Family Service Society inspected a squatters’ village in the old coke ovens near Pueblo Junction, the inhumane conditions appalled them. “With but slight strain on the imagination, one might picture the old smelter site as the graveyard of a sizeable city, laid waste by the ravages of war,” The *Pueblo Star-Journal and Sunday Chieftain* observed. “But no stretch of the imagination could make of it a fit place for humans to live.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Arla Aschermann, “Pueblo—1931,” *Pueblo Lore*, July 1984, 10; Michael Theis, “The Great Depression—Revisited,” *Pueblo Lore*, November 2009, 8–9; Carl Ubbelohde, Maxine Benson, and Duane A. Smith, *A Colorado History*, 8th ed. (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 2001),

The migrant problem, especially in terms of indigent Mexicans, became so acute in Colorado, particularly in Pueblo, that it led the state to militarize its border with New Mexico. At the beginning of the Great Depression, unemployment in Colorado was above the national average. At the same time, Mexicans became the largest immigrant group in the state, mostly employed in the sugar beet fields of the Arkansas Valley and northeastern Colorado. But while sugar beet farms had been particularly hard hit by the crisis, WPA officials in Colorado often refused to enroll Mexican farm workers in relief programs in order to retain cheap field labor for sugar beet and melon farmers, especially in the Arkansas Valley. Those officials sometimes even dropped from the rolls American citizens who happened to have Hispanic surnames. At the same time, thousands of destitute Mexicans migrated northward through New Mexico in hopes of finding work. Thus while the U.S. Census Bureau classified Mexicans as white, a distinctive anti-Mexican racial disqualification for federal relief evolved in Colorado, what one investigator termed as “industrial slavery far worse than the chattel slavery of old.” In March 1936, Governor Edwin C. Johnson sought to capitalize on anti-Mexican sentiment, threatening “a roundup of all aliens in the state, their shipment to detention camps, and deportation if federal officials refused to do so.” Then on April 18, the governor ordered the Colorado National Guard to the New Mexico border, which he placed under martial law.<sup>48</sup>

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300; Hazel A. Smith, “Human ‘Moles’ Burrow into Old Ovens at Abandoned Smelter,” *Pueblo Star-Journal and Sunday Chieftain*, August 1, 1931.

<sup>48</sup> Carl Abbott, Stephen J. Leonard, and David McComb, *Colorado: A History of the Centennial State*, 3rd ed. (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1994), 292, 327; Athearn, *The Mythic West in the Twentieth Century*, 99–100; Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado: The Making of a Western American Landscape*, 268; Stephen J. Leonard, *Trials and Triumphs: A Colorado Portrait of the*

“Big Ed” Johnson, a “maverick Democrat,” was perhaps the most vocal of a number of prominent Western politicians who, steeped in regionalism, saw the New Deal as an unwelcomed expansion of the federal government into what they considered the last haven for the rugged individual. Johnson ordered soldiers “...to refuse entry to any indigent Mexicans seeking to take jobs away from U.S. voters.” On the second day of the blockade, the *Pueblo Chieftain* reported that “Other groups on freight trains, in autos, in trucks and hitch-hiking into the state were being stopped....It was estimated that scores of the them would have landed in Pueblo, or surrounding beet growing districts.” With New Mexico threatening to boycott Colorado goods and produce and a vocal protest by leaders in the Roman Catholic Church as well as Mexican American advocacy groups, the blockade only lasted a few days. Yet among local law-enforcement authorities, Johnson openly advocated discrimination, supporting a robust campaign of detaining and deporting Spanish-speaking migrants. The federal government, on the other hand, saw the blockade as yet another example of the provincialism that had grown since World War I and contradictory to its attempts to promote modernism.<sup>49</sup>

The second issue that affected Pueblo more than Colorado’s other large cities was the ecological devastation of the Dust Bowl. Drought and subsequent wind erosion hit the city’s agricultural hinterlands, in southeastern Colorado, particularly hard. The Dust Bowl consumed fourteen counties in that part of the state, accounting for 9.5 million acres affecting some 5,000 to 10,000 family farms. According to a federal report, grazing

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*Great Depression with FSA Photographs* (Niwot, Colo: University Press of Colorado, 1993), 104–6.

<sup>49</sup> Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, *Colorado*, 292, 327; Athearn, *The Mythic West in the Twentieth Century*, 99–100; “Guardsmen Stop 14 Penniless, Jobless Men En Route Here,” *Pueblo Chieftain*, April 20, 1936, 1, 14; Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado: The Making of a Western American Landscape*, 268; Leonard, *Trials and Triumphs*, 104–6.

land in this same part of the state “had lost 88 percent of its former value.” And while the elevation and topography of Colorado Springs largely spared it from the brunt of the epic dust storms, Pueblo was not so lucky. The city rather famously marked the western edge of the Dust Bowl and bore the brunt of devastation more than any other of Colorado’s urban areas. Fierce winds and dust funneled up the Arkansas Valley like the barrel of a rifle, literally sandblasting paint off automobiles in the city and pitting their windshields. The storms whipped up static electricity that fouled ignitions, forcing Puebloans to drive with heavy chains trailing behind them to ground their cars. Schools dismissed for days as the dust seeped through poorly sealed windows and doors, making it difficult for students to see chalkboards. Stores on Main Street employed young women to model dust masks for wheezing customers.<sup>50</sup> In July 1934, when water in the Arkansas River should have been running at 1,687 cubic feet per second, it dwindled to just eighty-one cubic feet per second. In March 1935 it ran dry, forcing severe water rationing in Pueblo.<sup>51</sup> Even after heavy rains and snows in early 1938 helped squelch the drought in much of the Dust Bowl, precipitation failed to reach southeastern Colorado, where hard times persisted. “Hardly a day passed in Colorado when the dust did not blow,” observed R. Douglas Hurt. More surprisingly, the dust that fell on Pueblo was polychromatic, ranging from red to blue, yellow to brown.<sup>52</sup> “Well we had two different kinds,” remembered Grace Ford, who grew up on the plains northeast of Pueblo. “There was one kind that

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<sup>50</sup> Leonard, *Trials and Triumphs*, 120–22; Arla Aschermann, “The Dust Bowl of the 1930’s,” *Pueblo Lore*, August 1999, 3; Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, 25th Anniversary ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 111–12; Joanne West Dodds, *Pueblo: A Pictorial History* (Norfolk, Va.: Donning Company, 1982), 168.

<sup>51</sup> James Earl Sherow, *Watering the Valley: Development along the High Plains Arkansas River, 1870-1950* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1990), 53.

<sup>52</sup> R. Douglas Hurt, *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), 44–45.

blowed [sic] every day for days from one direction then the next week it would blow in the other direction. But the ones that really counted you could see them for miles and most of them looked kind of red and they were just tumbling and rolling just like a big old cloud on earth.”<sup>53</sup>

Pueblo occupied literally and figuratively the front lines of the Dust Bowl. On December 12, 1935, Dr. F.A. Anderson, director of the Colorado State Agricultural College Extension Service, convened a meeting of the nation’s foremost agricultural and soil scientists, geologists, and other experts, as well as local, state, and federal officials, at Pueblo’s Congress Hotel, the same place where, thirty-five years earlier, Puebloans touched off decades of violence with the lynching of Calvin Kimblern. Anderson’s meeting was the first to discuss the Dust Bowl as a national issue, and the statistics that emerged from the gathering were astonishing: 850 million tons of topsoil had been blown away in 1935, affecting an area of 4.3 million acres, nearly the land area of New Jersey. If the drought continued, the total area affected would increase to 5.6 million acres by the spring of 1936. Participants made no small plans to deal with the enormous issue. C.H. Wilson, of the New Deal’s Resettlement Administration, proposed that the federal government buy 2.25 million acres of farmland and retire it from cultivation. Perhaps the most enduring outcome of the Pueblo meeting was its focus on cooperation among local leaders and state and federal agencies, an arrangement that would remake Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and much of the West.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Grace Ford, interview by Andrew Gulliford, Typescript, February 22, 1976. Special Collections, Pikes Peak Library District.

<sup>54</sup> Aschermann, “The Dust Bowl of the 1930’s,” 3. The Congress Hotel, formerly known as the Grand Hotel, was the site of the Calvin Kimblern lynching on May 23, 1900. See chapter three.

Thus the huge number of unemployed families combined with the spirit of intergovernmental cooperation that emerged from the Dust Bowl meeting propelled Pueblo to the forefront of New Deal make-work programs in Colorado. To say the New Deal reinvented Pueblo would be an understatement. The Civil Works Administration (CWA), CCC, PWA, and WPA improved nineteen urban parks, ranging in size from the triangular pocket parks of The Bluffs and Mesa Junction to the sprawling expanses of City Park and Mineral Palace Park. Government crews toiled at Mountain View Cemetery, the Colorado State Fairgrounds, public schools, and Pueblo Junior College. They improved streets and bridges, water lines and sewers, and as they did in Colorado Springs, widened, reengineered, and installed flood controls on Fountain Creek and the Arkansas River.<sup>55</sup>

Among the first New Deal make-work programs to arrive in the area came not to the city proper but to Pueblo Mountain Park, thirty miles southwest of the city, near Beulah. The Civilian Conservation Corps utterly remade rural Colorado. Between 1933 and 1942, the CCC maintained over forty camps in the state and employed more than 30,000 young men. Toiling in national parks and forests as well as state and local parks, the young men of the CCC built the roads, trails, bridges, dams, campgrounds, shelters, cabins, and amphitheaters that opened the state's expansive backcountry to the leisured recreation that defined modern Colorado. For its construction projects, whether they were trail improvements or patrol cabins, the CCC relied on locally available yet minimally

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<sup>55</sup> "Miscellaneous Urban Park Projects," *Pueblo Lore* 33, no. 2 (February 2007): 10.

processed building materials, including unhewn, locally quarried rocks and logs that were often not even peeled of their bark.<sup>56</sup>

The result was an architectural vernacular that gave new life to the Rustic style, a subcategory of the Craftsman style popular beginning around the turn of the twentieth century. The Rustic featured all the attributes of the Craftsman: large porches, gabled roofs with shed-roofed dormers, exposed rafter and purlin ends, prominent hearths and chimneys, and small-paned casement windows. Yet with the Rustic, builders executed all these features in rough wood planks and logs as well as stone, often with whimsical balustrades wrought from bent branches and twigs. By and large, CCC corpsmen followed the plans of National Park Service architects. Influencing those architects, in turn, were Stephen Mather and Horace Albright, the first two directors of the National Park Service, who championed a comprehensive design program that both respected the landscapes of parks while promoting a consistent National Park Service “brand.” Thus what the CCC built in Colorado became known as the “National Park Service Rustic Style.” Since it was so widely built, the Rustic style became part of the expected National Park experience and of outdoor leisure and mountain living in Colorado.<sup>57</sup>

At Pueblo Mountain Park, the CCC built widely in the Rustic style. Pueblo County received three of the first Civilian Conservation Corps camps in Colorado, and

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<sup>56</sup> Ubbelohde, Benson, and Smith, *A Colorado History*, 302; Abbott, Leonard, and McComb, *Colorado*, 290–91.

<sup>57</sup> James B. Lindberg, “Introduction: An Architecture of Leisure,” in *Rocky Mountain Rustic: Historic Buildings of the Rocky Mountain National Park Area*, by James B. Lindberg, Patricia Raney, and Janet Robertson, ed. John Gunn (Estes Park, Colo.: Rocky Mountain Nature Association, 2005), 21; James B. Lindberg, “Parkitecture: National Park Service Rustic,” in *Rocky Mountain Rustic: Historic Buildings of the Rocky Mountain National Park Area*, by James B. Lindberg, Patricia Raney, and Janet Robertson, ed. John Gunn (Estes Park, Colo.: Rocky Mountain Nature Association, 2005), 132.



one of them encamped at San Isabel National Forest and Pueblo Mountain Park. The city had purchased the 611-acre parcel in 1919, at a time when many Front Range cities, including Colorado Springs, Denver, and Boulder, invested in foothills parks to connect their citizens, via automobile, to the mountains. While the 1921 flood derailed Pueblo's project, the CCC largely completed the city's initial vision for the park in the 1930s. Among the improvements were roads, dams, bridges, trails, and several structures. These buildings, most notably the caretaker's house, pavilion, and fire tower, all exhibited features typical of the Rustic style.<sup>58</sup>

Yet as the young men of the CCC reached the ends of their enrollments or, later, left to join the armed forces, the WPA increasingly took over their projects, and the shift in design at Pueblo Mountain Park was notable. The WPA continued the ethic of using minimally processed, locally available materials, but the administration's architects abandoned log construction, decorative stickwork and gabled roofs for native-stone walls, flat roofs with parapets, *vigas* and *canales*—in other words a vision of the Pueblo Revival style executed in stone rather than adobe and stucco. The WPA's Horseshoe Lodge, at Pueblo Mountain Park, even replicated the Spanish *haciendas* of New Mexico: a U-shaped building arranged around a *placita*, ringed with *portales*, or interconnected porches.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "'New Deal' Projects in Pueblo During the Depression Years—Part Two," *Pueblo Lore*, February 2007, 1.

<sup>59</sup> "WPA Activities in the Mountain Park," *Pueblo Lore* 33, no. 2 (February 2007): 5.

### Putting the Pueblo in Pueblo

Before the New Deal, the Pueblo Revival architectural style was rare, if not entirely nonexistent, in Pueblo. The style would have seemed antithetical to the city's gritty, industrial reality—an enigma in the “Pittsburgh of the West.” Beginning in the early twentieth century, some local architects began dabbling in Spanish-inspired architecture, most notably the Mission and Mediterranean revivals, for large houses and some public buildings. Perhaps the most notable example was the 1901–02 administration building and medical dispensary for the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company's Minnequa Steelworks (Figure 4.7). Here Frederick J. Sterner, with later additions by William Stickney, designed a fantasy seemingly ripped from California, complete with



Figure 4.7. CF&I administrative building at the Minnequa Steelworks, Pueblo, now the Steelworks Center of the West, in 2016. Photo by the author.

curvilinear parapets, a domed tower, quatrefoils, a stucco finish, and red-tile roof. The style was also popular for CF&I's company stores near its coal mines in Colorado and New Mexico.

Not only did the Pueblo Revival lack a precedent in Pueblo, but also the style that emerged in Santa Fe, which subsequently has been the subject of considerable historical study, was not the same Pueblo Revival the WPA constructed in Pueblo. The Pueblo Revival style consisted of at least two distinctive subtypes. The Spanish Pueblo Revival, also known as the Santa Fe style, featured smooth, stuccoed surfaces, usually painted a white or light pastel, with *vigas*, *canales*, a flat roof with parapet, rounded corners, buttresses, and wingwalls.<sup>60</sup> It was a fusion of indigenous forms, particularly Taos pueblo, and Spanish stylistic precedents, notably the Mission Revival. But the Spanish Pueblo Revival, which I refer to here as the Santa Fe Pueblo Revival, also fit with modern architectural styles. If one removed the *vigas*, *canales*, and other ornamental projections, Santa Fe Pueblo Revival-style buildings could easily become minimal interpretations of the Art Moderne (also known as Streamlined Moderne) or the International style, like the WPA Modern. Indeed, this was case for Meem's design from the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. As the WPA itself noted, the Pueblo Revival was, like modern architecture, a reaction against stale historicist styles. "Modern pueblo' houses [have been] built by some who have become rather bored of the usual bungalow, early Tudor, Spanish villa, and Georgian Colonial styles that prevail in the better residential sections of cities." Moreover, the Pueblo Revival's emergence in the 1920s as the style of choice for the

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<sup>60</sup> I will use the term "Santa Fe Pueblo Revival" to distinguish the modernist, adobe Spanish Colonial Revival from "Pueblo Ruins Revival," which is usually of stone construction and designed to appear like the ruins of a Native American settlement.

railroad resorts of the Southwest, particularly in New Mexico and Arizona, also connected it to the transportation sector's larger embrace of modern architecture.<sup>61</sup>

The Pueblo Revival architectural style was part of a larger effort of transplanted Anglos to claim and romanticize the Native American, Spanish, and Mexican past of the American Southwest. It was also notable as part of the first large-scale stylistic wave to travel West to East along the railroads and early highways. This movement also included the Mediterranean Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, and Mission Revival.

Numerous cultural and architectural historians have investigated the rise of the Pueblo Revival, especially in the contexts of the regionalization of New Mexico and southern California. Among them are historians Chris Wilson, William Deverell, Phoebe Kropp, and George Sánchez. As the narrative generally unfolds, in the wake of manifest destiny the distinctive architecture of the Hispanic Southwest became a battleground in the war for white supremacy. As noted in the first chapter, “Americans equated adobe buildings, which to their eyes seemed to be in a perpetual state of decay, with loose women, gambling, cowardice, a lack of proper hygiene, and immoral clergy,” Chris Wilson writes of Santa Fe.<sup>62</sup> The situation was similar in Los Angeles, according to Deverell, whose *Whitewashed Adobe* is strikingly similar to Wilson's study. “Adobe meant backwardness to American arrivals,” Deverell writes. “[A]dobe was Catholic,

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<sup>61</sup> For example, Mary Colter's Pueblo Revival-style El Navajo Hotel, in Gallup, New Mexico, “exhibits close ties to international modernism.” See Arnold Berke, *Mary Colter: Architect of the Southwest*, 1st ed. (Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 17; Works Progress Administration Writers' Program, *Colorado: A Guide to the Highest State* (New York: Hastings House, 1941), 80.

<sup>62</sup> Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 52–53.

adobe was missions, adobe was the unusable past.”<sup>63</sup> First settlers applied elements of the Greek Revival style to existing adobe buildings, such as Santa Fe’s Palace of the Governors, inadvertently creating the vernacular Territorial Style. Next came brick construction. “Brick stood for the Anglo future,” Deverell observes. “Brick was stolid, solid, and firm.” And then came the *coup de grâce*: the red-tile roof, which looked romantically Spanish enough—thus white enough—without being authentically Native American or Mexican. According to Phoebe S. Kropp, in *California Vieja*, the red-tile roof figures prominently in the Anglo-American remaking of California and its built environment, a symbol of the insidious elimination of Mexican heritage. “...Southern California’s landscape so thoroughly imbibed this romantic Spanish past that the memory appears to be almost a natural feature, an innate regional quality that eludes interpretation instead of a historical development that demands it.”<sup>64</sup>

Similarly, both Wilson and Kropp describe how the Anglo American reinterpretation of the Hispanic past in New Mexico and California, respectively, shaped regional building traditions connecting cities and the countryside. “The ironic change from adobe buildings disguised as stone or brick to stone, brick, and concrete buildings simulating adobe epitomizes the reversal of Santa Fe’s identity between 1875 and 1915,” Wilson observes.<sup>65</sup> Promoted as historically honest while having no clear historical precedent, the Santa Fe Pueblo Revival style emerged from Santa Fe into northern New

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<sup>63</sup> William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 134–35.

<sup>64</sup> Phoebe S. Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 268.

<sup>65</sup> Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 100.

Mexico to become “one of the strongest regional idioms in the country.”<sup>66</sup> Kropp shows how the co-opting of Spanish and Mexican architecture in southern California promoted both a whitewashed, romanticized past and a progressive “good life” to be had in the state’s temperate climate, creating a self-fulfilling feedback loop. “[T]he Spanish-colonial style...offered a regional architectural resolution,” Kropp observes. “As architects began to articulate their preference for the Spanish-colonial style as their clients started to demand it, the style was dubbed the most appropriate one for the region.”<sup>67</sup>

But the Santa Fe Pueblo Revival was not what the WPA constructed in Pueblo. Unlike the Santa Fe Style, this alternative interpretation of the Pueblo Revival featured rough surfaces, usually unhewn, random-coursed native stone, and ragged edges. Stripped from the style were any Spanish or modern refinements, making the alternative version akin to the Craftsman style, particularly the Rustic Style so prominent in Colorado. But more than that, the style resembled the Acoma Pueblo, which unlike the Taos Pueblo, relied on stone as much as adobe, and especially the ruins at Mesa Verde, which had become one of Colorado’s most popular attractions with the rise of automobile tourism and the CCC’s improvements in accessibility and traveler comfort.

The Pueblo Revival style that emerged at Mesa Verde shared the same roots as the more popular Santa Fe version, but was an overt attempt to connect buildings to a prehistoric Native American past rather than a mythical Mexican past. Because the period’s prevailing racial schemas equated Native Americans with primitiveness, Anglo architects designed these buildings like ancient ruins because they saw them as inherently

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 293.

<sup>67</sup> Kropp, *California Vieja*, 165–67.

closer to nature and better suited to the region's natural environment. In fact, Mesa Verde's first buildings constructed in the style, the 1921 administration complex, were not the work of an architect but rather archeologist Jesse Nusbaum and his wife, Aileen Nusbaum, who were both acolytes of the early Santa Fe preservation movement. "Nusbaum's pre-occupation with the archeological aspects of his park led him to design structures that were in harmony with the prehistoric cultural setting of his park," observes architectural historian Laura Sollière Harrison. "Nusbaum used the indigenous building materials, as the Anasazi did, which served almost as a protective coloration in harmonizing the structures with their settings." It is important to note, however, that the Nusbaums did not consider the style a reference to the prehistoric past only. They studied extensively Cosmos and Victor Mindeleff's 1886–87 *Bureau of American Ethnology Report*, especially sections on contemporary Hopi architecture, which relied on much the same construction materials and methods. The Nusbaums considered modern architecture wholly inappropriate for the site. On the other hand, their Anasazi- and Hopi-inspired architecture would "help to preserve the Indian atmosphere which the ruins and environment create."<sup>68</sup>

Perhaps the greatest practitioner of the Mesa Verde version of the Pueblo Revival, which I will call Pueblo Ruins Revival, and the individuals most responsible for spreading it beyond the parks was Mary Colter. She was an architect who spent most of her career in the employ of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway and its associated Fred Harvey Company, which provided hospitality services to tourists in the Southwest.

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<sup>68</sup> Laura Soullière Harrison, "Architecture in the Parks National Historic Landmark Theme Study" (Department of the Interior, National Park Service, November 1986), 5, 12, 218, <http://npshistory.com/publications/architecture-in-the-parks.pdf>.

A student of the Arts and Crafts movement and well-versed in landscape design and decorative arts as well as architecture, Colter was among a generation with painter Oscar Brousse Jacobson who recognized Native American art as fine art that should be appreciated in its own landscapes and settings rather than in neoclassical museums. Additionally, following the lead of Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School, Colter became a proponent of regionalism in design. While initially designing in the Rustic and Santa Fe Pueblo Revival styles, Colter's design motifs changed as she explored Mexico, Indian settlements in the Southwest, and especially ruins, like Hovenweep National Monument, in Utah.<sup>69</sup> "For years an incomprehensible woman in pants, she rode horseback through the Four Corners making sketches of prehistoric Pueblo ruins, studying details of construction, the composition of adobes and washes," remarks Frank Waters in his 1950 book about Indian life. "She could teach masons how to lay adobe bricks, plasterers how to mix washes, carpenters how to fit viga joints."<sup>70</sup> Colter thus began designing and building tourist facilities—attractions in their own right—that resembled active pueblos and Indian ruins, mostly on the south rim of the Grand Canyon, including Hopi House (1905) and Hermit's Rest (1914). After a trip to photograph extensively the ruins at Mesa Verde, where the Round Tower at the Cliff Palace ruins captivated her, Colter returned to the Grand Canyon to construct the Watchtower at Desert View. In 1932 she completed an homage to the Round Tower, although much higher at seventy feet. She was concerned the tower did not look sufficiently ancient, so

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<sup>69</sup> Berke, *Mary Colter*, 13, 17; Adam Thomas, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for the Oscar Brousse Jacobson Cabin, Allenspark, Colorado (5BL7894)" (Estes Park, Colo.: Historitecture, July 1, 2004).

<sup>70</sup> Frank Waters, *Masked Gods: Navajo and Pueblo Ceremonialism* (Chicago: The Swallow Press, 1950), 111.



she added ruined walls to improve the desired effect. “It was impractical to the design the Watchtower in as ruinous a condition as usually prevails,” she noted, “and the adjacent broken down walls to the west add to the desired atmosphere.”<sup>71</sup>

New Deal architects were likely familiar with Colter’s designs even if they were not acquainted with the architect herself. Yet stylistic choices for WPA construction in Colorado may have stemmed from a combination of district boundaries with climatic and landscape differences. Notably, all three of Colorado’s principal cities, Denver, Pueblo, and Colorado Springs, were each in different districts. Pueblo County was part of District Four, with Otero, Las Animas, Huerfano, Baca, Bent, Prowers, Crowley, and Kiowa counties—all of southeastern Colorado and the Arkansas Valley south of the Tortilla Curtain. While other districts built widely in local vernaculars, the Rustic style, and modernism, Spanish Revival architecture dominated in District Four, reflecting an already well-developed sense of regionalism. In arguing its stylistic choice for Pueblo’s new welfare building, the WPA stated, “Designed along Spanish lines, the welfare structure will reflect the architecture that is considered ‘native’ to Southern Colorado and New Mexico.” The WPA’s *Colorado: A Guide to the Highest State* suggests, “Adobe structures are beautiful in an appropriate setting of a cliff wall and mesa, for their simple lines and soft coloring harmonize well with their background.”<sup>72</sup>

While the welfare building was a stone structure, Spanish Revival architecture in the rest of the state may have had to do with “a renaissance of ‘dobe construction,” the WPA helped launch in southeastern Colorado. Indeed, the administration admitted that

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<sup>71</sup> Berke, *Mary Colter*, 187–98.

<sup>72</sup> “Stone Widely Used on Pueblo Projects”; Works Progress Administration Writers’ Program, *Colorado: A Guide to the Highest State*, 79.

many of the new buildings in that part of the state would have been impossible to construct without the cost savings of adobe. “The structural values of ‘dobe in rather well defined areas of low rain and humidity had been recognized from ancient times,” *The WPA Worker* promoted. “The simplicity and low man year cost of producing ‘dobe and its unique insulating characteristics have greatly encouraged local sponsors to adopt ‘dobe as building material.” Yet the journal was quick to warn that despite the cost savings and thermal benefits, adobe construction was only feasible “in its proper dry environment....” Echoing travel writers more than a half century earlier, the WPA frequently pointed out that the very earth itself was different in southern Colorado compared to the rest of the state. For instance, in widening the channel of Fountain Creek through Pueblo, WPA workers had to resort to dynamite since “Dragline operations in moving dirt at the channel opening had been unsuccessful because of the hard character of the ground, which was hardened adobe.”<sup>73</sup>

New Deal construction programs often expressed preconceived notions of cultural aesthetics and regional vernaculars. As Chris Wilson points out, these programs constructed Spanish Pueblo- and Territorial Revival-style courthouses on plazas in central New Mexico, which the New Deal agencies perceived as mostly Hispanic. The more Anglo eastern part of the state, however, received modern styles, particularly Art

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<sup>73</sup> “Terry J. Owens,” *The WPA Worker*, August 1936, 4; “Construction Costs Cut by Using Adobe,” *The WPA Worker*, February 1937, 16; “A Renaissance of ‘Dobe Construction,” *The WPA Worker*, August 1936, 7; “‘Ol’ Man River’ To Be Harnessed,” *The WPA Worker*, September 1936, 22. Adobe structural systems were popular among New Deal building programs even beyond the Southwest. The Division of Subsistence Homesteads constructed rammed-earth houses at its Garden Homestead, near Birmingham, Alabama, a decidedly rainy and humid climate. See Ghirardo, *Building New Communities*, 119.

Deco, for its courthouses.<sup>74</sup> WPA architects and construction foremen often insisted that they chose stylistic elements and building forms that fit the natural and built environments. For example, the WPA widely constructed the Santa Fe Pueblo Revival throughout southern Colorado. The Antonito teachers' dormitory, built in 1936, used adobe block and hand-hewn lumber. To provide a sense of great age to the building, workers, described as "farmhands and shepherders out of employment," covered metal fixtures and hardware in hammered lead and even scorched the woodwork with a blowtorch, "to give the appearance of mission fittings." As was often the case, the project's foreman, A.C. Schofield, argued that the stylistic choices derived from the existing setting: "...[T]he Spanish influence is reflected in many of its (Antonito's) buildings.... Adobe construction is widely used in the area."<sup>75</sup>

Yet the version of the Pueblo Revival the WPA imposed on Pueblo was an aesthetic of some mythological and long-gone past that had no notable precedent in the city.<sup>76</sup> For the construction of one of its earliest and largest buildings in Pueblo, the WPA seemed to have derived its design from the very dawn of Spanish conquest in the New World. In the mid 1930s, the Colorado State Fair Commission worked with the WPA to develop a massive complex of ten horse barns, each hosting fifty stalls. The commission predicated its need on the assumption that Pueblo was an ideal climate for raising race

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<sup>74</sup> Chris Wilson, "Center Place, Plaza, Square: Three Traditions of Place Making," in *The Plazas of New Mexico*, ed. Chris Wilson and Stefanos Polyzoides (San Antonio, Tex.: Trinity University Press, 2011), 45–46.

<sup>75</sup> Frank W. Pitman, "What Ingenuity Devised," *The WPA Worker*, June 1936, 6.

<sup>76</sup> New Deal agencies did construct large modernist buildings in the Pueblo area. For instance, in 1939, the largest PWA project in the state was a \$1.2 million building program at the Colorado State Hospital, in Pueblo. However, the hospital's campus was rather isolated northwest of the city, operated independently of the city, and was not frequently visited. See "Big WPA Projects Under Way Here," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, January 8, 1939, 7.

horses. They reasoned that such a business had not yet developed in the area due to a lack of facilities. By February 1937, the WPA completed four of the barns. Workers constructed them of native limestone gathered from quarries west and south of the city. As with the Antonito teachers' dormitory, workers handmade "the window frames, tie bolts, doors, windows, door hinges and bolts—virtually everything in the construction of the barns." Stylistically, the buildings resembled a minimal interpretation of the Pueblo Revival, with flat roofs, parapets, *canales*, and some modest Mission details. Despite these stylistic choices, WPA publications referred to the horse barns as "modern" and even "ultra-modern," an allusion not to the style and materials, as would be the case for Colorado Springs High School, but to the ventilation and electrical systems.<sup>77</sup>

Whether the WPA was imitating existing Spanish colonial towns or, less likely, actually following the Laws of the Indies, the arrangement of the horse barns in conjunction with their style was truly telling. More than 400 years ago, rule number 112 of the Laws of the Indies stipulated that the plazas of New World pueblos should form a rectangular space, "as this proportion is the best for festivals in which horses are used and any other celebrations which have to be held." In Pueblo, the WPA grouped the horse barns around a central square referred to as a "patio" (a small courtyard), but better reflected a plaza in size and ratio (with the sides longer than the ends), which the Laws of the Indies stipulated should be large enough for events and ceremonies involving horses. Beyond the ceremonial and commercial purposes, the Laws of the Indies championed the plaza arrangement because theoretically, it was easier to defend. This same argument was

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<sup>77</sup> Frank W. Pitman, "Modern Racing Plant Being Constructed by WPA for Training Horses at Colorado Fair Grounds," *The WPA Worker*, July 1936, 8; "Ultra-Modern Horse Barns Built at Pueblo: Horses, Horses...Kingdom for Horses," *The WPA Worker*, February 1937, 11.

not lost on the WPA, which boasted “the new buildings will also serve as walls for the north and west sides of the huge fair grounds” and promoted their street elevations as “forming [a] natural fence.” Perhaps most striking, the WPA chose an arcaded façade for the horse barn, forming long *portales* along the plaza. In the Laws of the Indies, the Spanish crown recommended the construction of shaded arcades and sidewalks along the plaza. For the first time in its history, then, Pueblo had a Spanish colonial plaza.<sup>78</sup>

Yet for most of the rest of their building projects in Pueblo, the CWA, CCC, and WPA tended to favor Mary Colter’s version of the Pueblo Revival—the Pueblo Ruins Revival. Some of that choice may have had to do with available building materials. Elsewhere in Colorado, the WPA tended to use adobe or, less frequently, concrete block, structural clay tile, or frame construction for Pueblo Revival-style buildings. These structural systems required a stucco finish, which better fit with the Santa Fe Pueblo Revival. In Pueblo, where residents had built adobe structures into the 1920s, the CWA, CCC, and WPA decided to use local limestone from the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company’s quarry at Lime. Thus the Pueblo “pueblos” would be stone buildings. Yet even this decision is puzzling. The quarry existed for modern construction. Most notably, Pueblo’s smelters and the Minnequa Steelworks used this limestone as flux. Moreover, other operations at Lime roasted and crushed limestone for stucco. As an exterior wall cladding, stucco was very popular in Pueblo throughout the twentieth century, likely because of the steel mill. Soot from the blast furnaces and other pollution tended to soil and even degrade exterior wall cladding. Since stucco was inexpensive and easy to install,

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<sup>78</sup> Laws of the Indies quoted in James E. Vance, *The Continuing City: Urban Morphology in Western Civilization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 214; John W. Reps, *Town Planning in Frontier America*, New edition (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1981), 29; Pitman, “Modern Racing,” 8.



Figure 4.8. WPA-built band shell and bridge at Lake Clara, Mineral Palace Park, Pueblo, 2016. Photo by the author.

its reapplication every few years was a simple solution to the effects of industrial pollution. Moreover, many steelworkers tended to engage in stucco work during downturns in the industry.<sup>79</sup>

When it came to building improvements in the city's largest parks, City Park and Mineral Palace Park, design precedents already existed. Yet unlike at Monument Valley Park, the CWA, PWA, and WPA seem to have ignored these precedents, insisting on building the Pueblo Ruins Revival style. Still dominating the northern edge of Mineral Palace Park in the 1930s was the hulking and inexplicable Colorado Mineral Palace. The building was badly deteriorated, but a 1934 CWA project helped stabilize and weatherproof the palace. A later WPA project sought to reopen the building and even involved Professor Paul Keating, from the Colorado School of Mines, to inventory and

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<sup>79</sup> "Rock Quarries," *Pueblo Lore*, February 2007, 19; Jeffrey DeHerrera, Cheria Yost, and Adam Thomas, *Forged Together in the Bessemer Neighborhood* (Denver: Historitecture, 2012), 100, 102.



Figure 4.9. Despite the modern design of the WPA-built band shell at Lake Clara, the rear elevation of the structure expresses the Pueblo Ruins style. Photo by the author.

redesign the exhibits. Unfortunately, the project was too little too late; the city demolished the Mineral Palace in 1942–43.<sup>80</sup>

Yet the CWA and WPA did not look to the Mineral Palace for a design precedent. Instead, as they began construction around 1935, they selected locally quarried, buff-colored limestone for walls, curbs, and buildings. Perhaps the most notable New Deal improvements were the bridge and band shell at Lake Clara (Figure 4.8). When seen together, they completed a graceful and inviting picture. The triple-arched bridge was substantial yet minimal in design. The band shell was similar to other WPA Modern-style band shells built across the United States. But when viewing the band shell from the rear, one discovered a rather unexpected Pueblo Ruins Revival-style building (Figure 4.9), with stepped parapets and tile *canales*, closely resembling those built at the Colorado

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<sup>80</sup> George R. Williams, “The Colorado Mineral Palace,” *Pueblo Lore* 33, no. 1 (January 2007): 7–8.





Figure 4.10. The former Lake Clara boathouse, in 2016, now the Community Art Building, is one of the best examples of the WPA's Pueblo Ruins Revival style in Mineral Palace Park. Photo by the author.

State Fairgrounds. The community boathouse (Figure 4.10), adjacent to Lake Clara, exhibited the same style, except with the addition of *vigas* and a *portale*.<sup>81</sup> While official WPA publications said nothing about the architectural style at Mineral Palace Park, they emphasized that the architecture was somehow more harmonious with the park's natural setting, the very ethic behind the Rustic style. They noted that their improvements were "Nature's New Interpretation of Grace and Beauty at Mineral Palace Park."<sup>82</sup>

But there may have been more to the Pueblo Ruins Revival than material and setting. Indeed, it may not be entirely accurate to argue that the Pueblo Ruins style was without precedent in Pueblo. While it is true the city lacked any notable Pueblo Revival architecture before the New Deal, structures resembling those the CWA, PWA, and WPA

<sup>81</sup> George R. Williams, "Lake Clara—Bridge—Boat House—Band Shell—Lilly Pond," *Pueblo Lore* 33, no. 1 (January 2007): 10; "Distinctive Lake Front Structure at Pueblo," *The WPA Worker*, April 1937, 22.

<sup>82</sup> "Nature's New Interpretation of Grace and Beauty at Mineral Palace Park-Pueblo," *The WPA Worker*, June 1936, 6.



constructed in Pueblo did exist—in the much-maligned neighborhood of Goat Hill, also known as Old Mexico. In fact, the Pueblo Ruins Revival style resembled structures in photographs of the neighborhood and the popular postcard depictions of it, as seen in chapter 3 (Figure 3.11 and Figure 3.12). Rising on a promontory visible from downtown, the neighborhood was unavoidable. Moreover, the area would have loomed large as it was the focus of several New Deal welfare and urban renewal programs. Thus the WPA's architectural vernacular in Pueblo may well have come from one of the city's poorest neighborhoods and one of its highest concentrations of nonwhite residents. If so, then the WPA may have considered the slum quintessentially Pueblo, a throwback or even remnant of the ancient trading post. As a vernacular, the style then took on all the baggage of the past, from the ridicule of nineteenth-century travel writers to the shocking racial violence of the early twentieth century.

And nowhere does the Pueblo Ruins Revival more closely resemble Goat Hill, or Old Mexico, than in the city's grandest open space, City Park, where the existing styles were a hodgepodge of City Beautiful Neoclassical, evident in the park's main gate, and Colorado Rustic, seen in its pavilions. The CWA and PWA constructed every new building and structure from very rough pink sandstone, severely uncoursed and without a single finished surface. These included everything from two small bridges over Bessemer Ditch, to connect holes of the City Park Golf Course, to the enormous Pueblo Zoological Park complex. For the tennis court grandstands and attached recreation building (Figure 4.11), the WPA chose a curious design centered on a ruined tower, similar to Colter's Desert View Watchtower, flanked by crumbling walls and the remains of an arcade. A

similar sense of ruin pervaded the golf course clubhouse, with the same jagged parapet but with a large hearth and chimney taking the place of the tower.<sup>83</sup>



Figure 4.11. The tennis court grandstands, at City Park, are among the best expressions of the WPA's Pueblo Ruins revival. Photo by the author.

But the convergence of myth and artifice reached its highest expression in the Pueblo Zoological Park, the result of combining three separate city-owned zoos into a single facility at City Park. It was the largest of dozens of city park projects and involved creating an entirely new landscape. Earth and rocks dug from the zoo's moat and bear pit, as well as from new ponds and lakes, went to construct "Monkey Mountain" in the center of the zoo. Here the WPA anchored a fantasy

of ruins, complete with well-trod walkways twisting around what seemed to be ancient towers and walls. Perhaps most remarkable were the bear pits (Figure 4.12), which the WPA constructed to look like a series of excavated ancient foundations. Beneath the artificial mountains, filled with small pools, and crisscrossed by steps, the ruins were a

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<sup>83</sup> George R. Williams, "City Park Golf Course," *Pueblo Lore* 33, no. 1 (January 2007): 39–40; George R. Williams, "City Park Tennis, Wading Pools, Softball Field and Horse Show Court Projects," *Pueblo Lore* 33, no. 1 (January 2007): 41–42.

miniature Mesa Verde. Pueblo historian George Williams has called the bear pits “Perhaps the most difficult WPA project in City Park. The sandstone used for this project is exceptionally large in size and required great effort to move and set in place.” The WPA itself called the stones “mammoth.” And the aviary (Figure 4.13) resembled a long-since abandoned *hacienda* or mission, with a deteriorating arcade reminiscent of then-popular photographs of the Mission San Antonio de Padua, in California. The WPA boasted that “the rustic treatment of laying stone gives a distinctive appearance to the building, which has attracted thousands of visitors.”<sup>84</sup>

The architectural style New Deal agencies relied on for most of their new construction in Pueblo was inexplicable; they built it nowhere else in the state. Even in Trinidad, eighty-five miles to the south of Pueblo and only a few miles north of the New Mexico border, the WPA stuck with the more common Santa Fe Pueblo Revival. For instance, the WPA built a court of small buildings for community functions and civic affairs. They based the design on Bent’s Old Fort, a nineteenth-century trading post further northeast on the Arkansas River, and not on some artifact from prehistory. Elsewhere in southern Colorado, New Deal agencies relied on the Santa Fe Pueblo Revival, or rather sophisticated expressions of the Mission Revival, as seen in the Alamosa County Courthouse, situated in the San Luis Valley, a place that has been home to Spanish and Mexican settlers decades before Pueblo.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> George R. Williams, “Bear Pits,” *Pueblo Lore* 33, no. 1 (January 2007): 34; “Unique Structures in Pueblo Park,” *The WPA Worker*, October 1936, 22; David Glassberg, “Making Places in California,” in *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life*, by David Glassberg (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 184–85.

<sup>85</sup> “WPA-Constructed Stone Masonry Buildings Enhance Civic Life in Trinidad,” *The WPA Worker*, May 1937, 9; “Spanish Style Court House Being Built in Alamosa,” *The WPA Worker*, May 1937, 10.



Figure 4.12. Bear pits as seen from Monkey Mountain, looking toward the aviary, Pueblo Zoo. (Postcard from the author's collection.)

Wholly manufactured in the 1930s or “authentic,” the ruins of the Southwest not only rejected modernity but also distended and obscured chronologies. For instance, Phoebe Kropp traces the rise of automobile tourism along the Camino Real, in California, during the first few decades of the twentieth century. The scenic highlights of those tours were the ruins of missions, “proof that they belong to the ‘broken past.’” “The discourse on ruins in promotional articles, guidebooks, and tourist diaries both added to the missions’ romantic allure and pushed them further back in time,” Kropp observes. “In this formula, the more anachronistic the missions appeared, the more precious was their romance, and thus the more popular they became. This kind of tourism exoticized the past by casting missions as products of a distant age and a foreign people.” Furthermore, Kropp argues that mission ruins evoked a sense of nineteenth-century romanticism—the





Figure 4.13. Arcaded *portale* of the aviary, Pueblo Zoo, 2016. Photo by the author. same romanticism as seen in the first chapter—and appealed to tourists as a retreat from industrial modernity.<sup>86</sup>

More importantly, the ruins of the Southwest provided a means to Anglicize the past by pushing Spanish influence into the immemorial, denigrating Mexicans, and making Indians disappear. “More than anything, the ruins naturalized the end of the Spanish era..., providing an organic explanation for the region’s chronology,” Kropp writes. “...[T]he demise of the missions was inevitable—the result of a natural rather than a historical process of change that vaulted Anglos to regional domination.” It was a logic that seemed inescapable. The idea that Mexicans would inevitably vanish into the ruined past of the Southwest had persisted since at least the 1840s. As Thomas Jefferson Farnham observed in his 1844 *Travels in California*, “The law of Nature which curses the mulatto here with a constitution less robust than that of either race from which he sprang,

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<sup>86</sup> Kropp, *California Vieja*, 76–77; Glassberg, “Making Places in California,” 187.

lays a similar penalty upon the mingling of the Indian and white races in California and Mexico. They must fade away....<sup>87</sup>

### Regionalism and Modernity in New Deal Arts

The WPA's efforts to reinforce regionalism and introduce modernism were not restricted to construction. Indeed, supporting its infrastructure programs were art and literature projects that reiterated the divide, providing Colorado Springs with a blueprint for the future and resigning Pueblo to the past.



Figure 4.14. "Hard Rock Miners," by Archie Musick, 1934, Colorado Springs City Auditorium. City of Colorado Springs.

One of the most intriguing examples of this phenomenon are the murals at Colorado Springs City Auditorium. Completed in 1922, the building was part of the same municipal auditorium craze that led to Pueblo's Memorial Hall. But the building was also notable in that it was among the last, if not the very last, neoclassical-style public

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<sup>87</sup> Thomas Jefferson Farnham, *Travels in California*, 1st ed., 1844 (Oakland, Calif., 1947), 161.

building constructed in the city. Those that followed replicated either the Mediterranean architecture of the resorts or, after Colorado Springs High School, high modernism. The WPA funded two companion murals intended for arched recesses above the ticket counters. Artists Archie Musick and Tabor Utley completed the murals in 1934. A decade earlier Archie Musick “blew into town on a freight train” and, like so many before him, became enchanted by the city’s spectacular setting and decided to remain there, teaching at public schools in the area. Interestingly, Musick studied with prolific American painter Thomas Hart Benton who, with Grant Wood and John Steuart Curry, led the Regionalist art movement that later found considerable expression in WPA murals. Tabor Utley came to Colorado Springs “for his health” and had a more formal education than Musick, studying at the Louvre, in the Paris, and at museums in Luxembourg. He later taught art at the Broadmoor Academy and Pueblo Community College. He also assisted Boardman Robinson painting murals at New York’s Rockefeller Center, one of the most complete visions of early American modernism ever constructed.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> City of Colorado Springs, “City Auditorium Murals,” *Colorado Springs*, accessed September 5, 2016, <https://coloradosprings.gov/city-auditorium/page/city-auditorium-murals>; Bill Reed, “City Auditorium Murals, Monument Creek Wall Are Part of New Deal’s Legacy,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, May 6, 2008, <http://gazette.com/city-auditorium-murals-monument-creek-wall-are-part-of-new-deals-legacy/article/36041>.



Figure 4.15. “The Arts,” by Tabor Utley, 1934, Colorado Springs City Auditorium. City of Colorado Springs.

Musick, as a regionalist, and Utley, as a modernist, painted murals that both revered Colorado Springs’s past and propelled its future, connecting the source of the city’s wealth to the expression of that affluence. Ruins inspired Musick’s “Hard Rock Miners” (Figure 4.14), particularly the ruins of the Victor-Cripple Creek gold mines that made Colorado Springs fabulously wealthy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The mural encompasses the evolution of mining, from rugged prospectors panning and picking for gold, to muscle-bound hard-rock miners, and finally to smoke-belching smelters and mechanized mining. Utley, on the other hand, painted a vision of modernity and leisure he entitled “The Arts” (Figure 4.15). At the center, a muse embraces the innocence of youth while sitting between theater masks. To her left are a violinist, classical dancer, and couples dancing frenetically. To the right is a pianist and an African American chorus, the men dressed in tuxedos and women in formal gowns. The vibrant colors, severely geometric shapes, and the black chorus all signal jazz-age urban modernity rather than the stuffy classicism dominating the rest of the auditorium.



Together, the murals both revered and buried the city's regional past while providing an energetic vision of its future that connected it to the larger national popular culture.

No such vision of the future existed in the WPA's arts projects in Pueblo.<sup>89</sup> For instance, as part of the WPA's Recreational Project, Denver playwright Lillian Metz Hendrix composed an historical pageant for Pueblo. The pageant was, like the larger historical pageant movement in the first half of the twentieth century and like the emergence of Spanish revival architecture, a regionalist attempt to whiten the indigenous and Mexican past. Hendrix's play was no different. For her, the history of Southern Colorado did not begin until the Spanish arrived at some indeterminate point long ago. Indians existed only in passing mentions of tribes or as stereotyped portrayals of "braves and maidens." Mexicans did not exist at all. Instead, Hendrix spent most of her time developing pastoral scenes through which various actors moved, such as this solitary "Spanish" shepherd:

"...an humble Spaniard might have been seen following his flock of sheep, singing a shepherd's song of old Spain. A trader journeys through to barter with the Utes; an adventurous prospector passes lured by visions of gold in the Sangre de Christo Mountains; and Indian hunter goes noiselessly by seeking the bison or buffalo; a freighter appears and goes on its way. But for these symbols of the past and future the vast plains are deserted."<sup>90</sup>

The stage directions for this scene recommend that the shepherd and his sheep remain on the stage while the other characters pass by them; an ancient pastoral image of Pueblo remains the only constant.

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<sup>89</sup> The WPA's Federal Arts Project itself revealed a geographic bias in terms of the Tortilla Curtain. Under Donald Bear, who had been director of the Denver Art Museum, artists in Denver, Colorado Springs, Estes Park, and Grand Junction produced a variety of art. Yet none were working in Pueblo, despite it being the second largest city. See Leonard, *Trials and Triumphs*, 292.

<sup>90</sup> Lillian Metz Hendrix, "Pueblo Pageant" (Typescript, Denver, 1937), 2, Western History Collection, Denver Public Library.

Hendrix reserves most of the dialog for white Americans, beginning with Zebulon Pike. In one scene, a Comanche chief threatens Pike in stereotypically stilted English.

Pike responds with bravado:

Doctor: It looks serious, Pike.  
Pike: The Indians are not our greatest danger, Doctor.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut: You mean Spaniards, Lieutenant Pike?  
Pike: Yes, Lieutenant. As long as Spain and our government are on the point of war, every Spaniard is our enemy.<sup>91</sup>

The mythic past of Pueblo became a way to entrap brown skin in a prison of white domination; but the city itself became stuck in the same mythology.

The real struggle for Hendrix was trying to reconcile the gritty industrial, multi-ethnic, multi-racial reality of Pueblo with the supposed Southwestern mythology of both its name and setting. She admits in a prologue to the play, “There is so much history connected with your city and county that to have included all would make the pageant far too long.” Instead she crafted a celebration of a vanished age, complete with marauding Indians, greedy Spanish explorers, pious friars, rugged French trappers, and the usual assortment cowboys and prospectors who littered the mythic West. Hendrix’s timeline is essentially unbroken from Spanish contact through the 1858 discovery of gold in scene fourteen. But in scene fifteen, she skips to 1895, essentially glossing over the entire industrial development of Pueblo. Moreover, after a few lines about the city in 1895, the play then quickly moves to “Life on the Range,” including cowboys singing around a campfire and a “Spanish Hascienda [sic].” From there the play proceeds to the present day (1937) where she vaguely suggests “banners, parades, floats, and other ways” to represent modern Pueblo, or “that the very last epilogue would be a parade of the

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 5.

livestock and products of the county.” Although she was from Denver, Hendrix seemed to be curiously unaware of the importance of the steel mill and railroads in Pueblo. Certainly there was no vision of the future. As Hendrix put it, she “used the present day as an epilogue.” The problem for Hendrix was that the myth of Pueblo had no room for the real story of Pueblo, for its present or its future.<sup>92</sup>

More successful at capturing the history of Pueblo through the 1930s was *Colorado: A Guide to the Highest State*. The book was part of the American Guide Series, a very popular and long-lived program of the WPA’s Federal Writers’ Project. It heavily promoted tourist sites in Colorado, particularly Mesa Verde. Yet like the travel narratives and guide books of the nineteenth century, *A Guide to the Highest State* promoted Colorado Springs over Pueblo, one seemingly better fit the state than the other. The guide boasts that Colorado Springs is “a tailor-made resort,” and continues to heap praise on its immaculate built environment:

To the general scene, roughed in by nature with extraordinary magnificence, man has made his contribution.... With marked civic pride the city presents to the world a shining, well-scrubbed aspect. Householders wash their walks every morning, regularly irrigate and mow their lawns, keep the hedges trimmed, and assiduously cultivate their flower gardens; even the railroad stations have spacious lawns and shrubbery. No factory smoke clouds the crystalline air.<sup>93</sup>

Pueblo, on other hand, “...appears to be an isolated community, an oasis in an arid land. Pennants of smoke from towering stacks are unmistakable evidence that here industry has obtained a firm foothold in Colorado.” The *Guide* continues:

The architecture of Pueblo has developed mainly along functional lines, with few embellishments. The newest and most impressive business blocks are along Main Street between Union Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, but

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., i, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Works Progress Administration Writers’ Program, *Colorado: A Guide to the Highest State*.

reminders of an earlier day exist in the low grimy brick buildings on Union Avenue....”<sup>94</sup>

While Pueblo was the second largest city in the state, the *Guide* tends to eliminate it from its tours and attractions. For instance, in the “Calendar of Annual Events” for tourists, the *Guide* mentions Colorado Springs nine times: Easter Sunday services at the Garden of the Gods, the Pikes Peak Celebration, the Wild Flower Show, the annual polo tournament, the Broadmoor Invitation Golf Tournament, the Will Rogers Rodeo, the Pikes Peak Automobile Races, a seed show, and the New Year’s Eve fireworks display on Pikes Peak. It mentions Pueblo only twice, for the Colorado State Fair and for Mexican Independence Day.<sup>95</sup> The “In the Cities and Towns” section of the guide includes four photographs from Colorado Springs: Pikes Peak Avenue, the Fine Arts Center, the Union Printers Home, and the Will Rogers Memorial. There are no photographs of Pueblo.<sup>96</sup>

### **Conclusion: New Deal Lessons During World War II**

The trends that began during the New Deal proved irreversible as federal investment in the West expanded exponentially during World War II and the Cold War. Choices about where and how federal dollars should be spent followed closely the mythmaking the New Deal inscribed on the built environment. As well, the experience of the New Deal provided some communities with a shrewdness to lure more federal investment. Thus, when the Army received funding to build fourteen new cantonments in the spring of 1941, Colorado Springs leapt at the opportunity, sending four members of its chamber of commerce to Washington immediately after the announcement. The

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., xxv–xxvii.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., xvii.

chamber continued to keep members in residence in Washington for the next two months and retained the services of Col. William McCleave as its full-time “industrial representative” at the War Department and Capitol. The Army stipulated that it desired a location with “availability of labor, supplies for construction, and transportation facilities.” Moreover, “Recreational and training facilities were also taken into consideration.” Here Colorado Springs’s spectacular setting and copious sunshine gave the city an advantage. When military brass arrived in Colorado Springs in June, they became swept up in the refined leisure of the resorts, and the mild weather delighted them. “It is not surprising that these generals returned to Washington deeply impressed by the military advantages of the climate and clean air at Pikes Peak,” concludes Marshall Sprague in a somewhat apocryphal yarn about the Army brass’s vintage liquor-fueled stay at the Broadmoor, “and also by the high quality of the environment in the Broadmoor Tavern.”<sup>97</sup>

Sweetening the deal, the City of Colorado Springs, now familiar with the benefits of federal investment and deftly understanding the methods needed to obtain it, purchased the 5,500-acre Cheyenne Valley Ranch, six miles south of the city, and pledged to donate it to the War Department if it chose Colorado Springs for a camp. The costs of the gift paled in comparison to the potential boon to the city. “It is estimated that such a camp as that proposed for Colorado Springs would cost about \$10,000,000,” reported the *Gazette*. “Much of this construction cost, as well as the monthly payroll of between \$1,000,000 and \$2,000,000, would flow directly into the trade channels of Colorado Springs.” After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941, the Army’s plans at Camp Carson expanded dramatically, with the federal government

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<sup>97</sup> Sprague, *Newport in the Rockies*, 347.

investing over \$25 million in the project. By 1942, 11,500 civilian workers were busy at the base, which the Army intended to house 35,173 enlisted men, 1,818 officers, and 592 nurses.<sup>98</sup> Far more people were employed at Camp Carson (promoted to Fort Carson in 1954) than would ever work at Pueblo's Minnequa Steelworks, even at the peak of its production. Tellingly, when Col. Wilfrid M. Blunt, commander of Camp Carson, addressed a gathering of the Chamber of Commerce at the Antlers Hotel on April 27, 1944, he introduced himself as, "plant manager of your largest industry...."<sup>99</sup> Colorado Springs had skillfully plugged itself into what historian Roger W. Lotchin has called the "metropolitan-military complex" and would reap a substantial reward in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, south of the Tortilla Curtain, federal wartime investment was very different in scale and function. Instead of a gift of land from the City of Pueblo, the War Department, seeking to build an army air base east of Pueblo, had to resort to condemning private land through the War Powers Act. The government completed its acquisition on December 27, 1941. Unlike Colorado Springs, where the landscape and climate seemed ideally suited for a base, the prospective, 3,780-acre site of the Pueblo Army Air Base, was "rolling prairies broken by dry arroyos," writes Ruby Lee

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<sup>98</sup> Camp Carson also housed a number of Italian prisoners of war. As was typical, a reporter visiting the internment camp felt that the POW's enjoyed Colorado Springs's climate, noting "They're young and happy and full of enthusiasm for life and its small, everyday adventures." See David E. Clark, "Internment Camp Marked by Widespread Cheeriness," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, June 29, 1943, 1-2.

<sup>99</sup> "Springs Named Site for Big Army Camp," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, July 17, 1941, 1, 9; "Army Camp Is Ordered South of C.S. and Work Will Be Started at Once," *Colorado Springs Evening Telegraph*, January 6, 1942, 1, 5; "Housing, Public Relations Said Vital to Camp Carson's Future," *Colorado Springs Gazette*, April 28, 1944, 14; Mary Therese Anstey, Cheria Yost, and Adam Thomas, *In Pursuit of the American Dream: Pueblo in the Modern Age, 1940-1982* (Denver: Historitecture, 2012), 46.

<sup>100</sup> Sherow, *Watering the Valley*, 66; Roger W. Lotchin, *Fortress California 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 3.

Ballantyne. “It seemed an unlikely spot for a sophisticated air base....”<sup>101</sup> But it was precisely that terrain, the landscapes south of the Tortilla Curtain, that interested the Army. Publically, the Army argued that the base was necessary to protect the Minnequa Steelworks and was far enough inland to avoid any potential strike from either the Japanese or the Germans. But it was the arid climate, endless vistas, and sparse population that attracted the Army to eastern Pueblo and western Otero counties. There the Army could build long runways—Pueblo’s were the longest in the West—as well as heavy bombing and gunnery ranges. For the Army, at least, the landscape was a wasteland and, therefore, an opportunity. It even acquired a huge swath of Pueblo County land as part of Fort Carson—again as a training and bombing range.

Thus the first heavy bombers, B-24 Liberators, arrived in Pueblo in September 1942, and the base hosted a number of bombardment groups that flew B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-29 Superfortresses. Pueblo Army Air Base was notable for training crews from a Chinese heavy bombardment group. At its peak, the base hosted 6,000 to 8,000 military personnel and 750 civilian workers. But Pueblo Army Air Base proved to be quite dangerous for its fliers. Between 1942 and 1945, 186 airmen died in thirty-six separate accidents.

Yet history continued to influence the relationship between the base and Pueblo, and some things had not changed since World War I, especially in terms of vice and violence. In 1944, the Army launched an undercover investigation “of certain rooming houses and hotels in the city.” The Army presented its findings to city officials in May, uncovering “two known and eight alleged houses of ill fame.” It also found several

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<sup>101</sup> Ruby Lee Ballantyne, “Pueblo Army Air Base: 1941–1947,” *Pueblo Lore*, June 1995, 13.

taverns on Union Avenue serving minors and allowing soldiers and airmen to imbibe too much. On May 26, the Army declared off limits five saloons and cafes on Union Avenue. Even this action was not enough as airmen continued to report for duty inebriated after a night on the town. Thus the Army ended up closing and securing almost all of Union Avenue for twelve days.<sup>102</sup>

At war's end, the Pueblo Chamber of Commerce stole a page from Colorado Springs and argued that the Army should keep the base open because of the advantages of climate and topography. After all, as the chamber was quick to note, "flying weather in Pueblo ranks third in the nation as 'most favorable' ninety-three percent of the year." But in the end, Pueblo's effort failed. There was no future for the air base. It closed on June 20, 1947, and in 1948 the War Department gave the facility to the City of Pueblo to relocate its municipal airport. The military had chosen Colorado Springs, not Pueblo.<sup>103</sup>

Thus whether it was New Deal construction and art projects or wartime military spending, the federal government set out two very different courses for Colorado's second cities. Indeed, even that status as second city would change dramatically in the aftermath of World War II. While both cities witnessed population growth following the war, the rate of population expansion in Colorado Springs was far greater than in Pueblo. As a result, by 1970 Colorado Springs became the second largest city in Colorado as Pueblo continued to fall in the state's population rankings.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Strader, "The Pueblo Army Air Base 1942–1945," 7; Sisson, "Pueblo Army Air Base: The War Years," 5.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 13–14; Robert Strader, "The Pueblo Army Air Base 1942–1945," *Pueblo Lore*, June 2012, 5–6, 11, 14; Ray L. Sisson, "Pueblo Army Air Base: The War Years," *Pueblo Lore*, October 2006, 8.

<sup>104</sup> Population figures based on decennial U.S. Census.



## CONCLUSION

### THE DIFFERENTIATED PLACE

Of all the buildings constructed in the fervor of Colorado's postwar boom, perhaps none captured the spirit of the moment like the Cadet's Chapel at the United States Air Force Academy, near Colorado Springs. Considered one of the finest examples of modern architecture ever constructed, it was a monument to the military-industrial complex, to Cold War sensibilities, and to suburban consensus culture. The building consisted of seventeen spires, each 150-feet high, serving as both the focal point of the 18,500-acre complex and as a visual connection between the low, rigid grid of the minimalist modern campus and the abruptly rising foothills of the Rampart Range (Figure C.1). Indeed, the building reflected both ultra-modern fighter jets and the peaks of the Front Range. "Just as West Point with its medieval fortress-like appearance symbolizes the traditions of land warfare," observed the *New York Herald Tribune* in 1955, "so does the sharp-lined and soaring Air Force Academy represent the newest and swiftest military science."<sup>1</sup> The chapel's design, by Walter Netsch, of the country's most prominent modern architecture firm, Skidmore, Owens and Merrill (SOM), consisted of 100 identical, seventy-five-foot tetrahedrons, composed of tubular steel and covered in aluminum panels, a design that the Air Force had incidentally considered for its aircraft hangars. The building was controversial from the start because the military envisioned the chapel as a bold political as well as religious statement. "Within the context of the

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<sup>1</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, May 16, 1955, quoted in Daniel J. Hoisington, "United States Air Force Academy, Cadet Area" (El Paso County, Colorado), National Historic Landmark Nomination Form, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2003, 25.



Figure C.1. The campus of the United States Air Force Academy is a landmark of modernist minimalism. The Cadet's Chapel is near the upper left. Postcard from the author's collection.

cold war and 'godless Communism,' the decision to have a chapel and the central element of the academy design was never questioned," observes architectural historian Robert Allen Nauman. This "godless Communism created a climate in which democracy and religion became synonymous."<sup>2</sup> Further, the division of the chapel's interior spaces said much about who could participate in postwar consensus culture and in what proportion; the Protestant chapel filled the iconic main floor, beneath the spires, while smaller Roman Catholic and Jewish worship spaces occupied the lower level.

Just as the view from the summit of Pikes Peak stood in as a summary of America for Katharine Lee Bates a half century earlier, so too did the site and architecture of the Air Force Academy. The Air Force Academy Site Selection Board, convened in 1949,

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Allen Nauman, *On the Wings of Modernism: The United States Air Force Academy* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 7, chpt. 5.

sifted through 300 sites in twenty-two states, ultimately selecting Colorado Springs for its perfect flying weather and dramatic setting. But the Korean War intervened, and the board's findings remained sealed. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who vacationed frequently in Colorado since his youth, signed the Air Force Academy Act on April 1, 1954. The new Air Force Site Selection Commission received 580 proposals from forty-five states. After inspecting thirty-four sites, the commission narrowed the choices to three: Lake Geneva, Wisconsin; an area ten miles west of Alton, Illinois; and Colorado Springs. Yet Colorado Springs was always front runner as "the members placed great emphasis on a site's natural beauty and its potential to provide a suitable setting for what would become a national monument." And the campus's architectural style was seemingly as preordained as the site. "We want the Academy to be a living embodiment of the modernity of flying and to represent in its architectural concepts the national character of the Academy," Harold E. Talbot, Secretary of the Air Force testified to a congressional committee. "We want our structures to be as efficient and as flexible in their design as the most modern projected aircraft."<sup>3</sup>

A sense of the inevitable pervaded newspaper accounts of the Academy's site selection, a sense built upon nineteenth-century travel accounts, twentieth-century boosterism, and a shared sense of God-given superiority. United Press wire stories read like the marketing efforts of the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce during the sanatorium boom. "In their back yard the cadets will have Pike's peak, the Pike national forest, some of the country's best ski runs and a spectacular jumble of grotesque rock

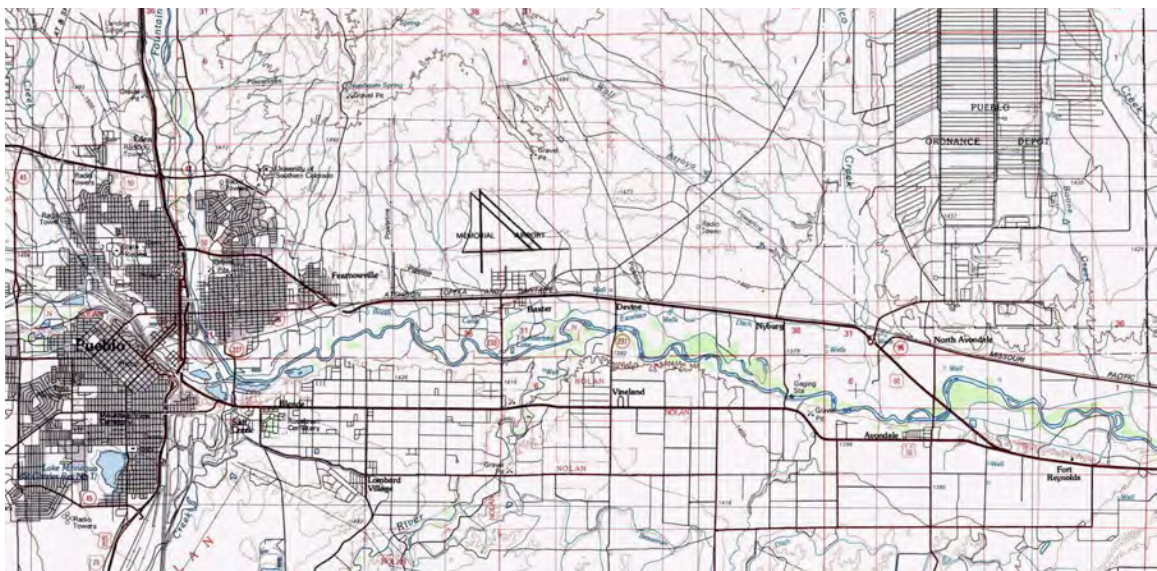
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<sup>3</sup> "Air Force Academy—Reading 3," *Teaching with Historic Places: The United States Air Force Academy: Founding a Proud Tradition*, accessed January 6, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/NR/twhp/wwwlps/lessons/114airforce/114facts3.htm>.

called the Garden of the Gods,” a United Press reporter wrote. “Selection of Colorado Springs as the site of the \$126,000,000 air force academy is a triumph for mother nature.”<sup>4</sup>

Yet the Air Force Academy was not the only vision of Cold War modernity to remake the landscape of Colorado’s Front Range. With its extensive railroad infrastructure, availability of massive swaths of land, and protection from coastal invasions, Pueblo was a very logical location for an Army ammunition storage and supply facility. Thus as part of the same post-Pearl Harbor mobilization that created Pueblo Army Air Base and Camp Carson, the U.S. Army acquired a whopping 24,202 acres fourteen miles east of the city for the Pueblo Ordnance Depot. At that time, the parcel was larger than the entire incorporated city of Pueblo (Map C.1). By January 1942, the U.S. Army Ordnance Corps began working on a complex of astonishing proportions: 1,100 temporary storage buildings, over 1,000 igloo-shaped ammunition storage bunkers, 140 miles of surfaced roads, fifty-eight miles of railroad track, and nearly forty miles of

Map C.1. The enormous Pueblo Ordnance Depot, at the upper right, claimed more land area than the entire incorporated city of Pueblo, at left. USGS



chain-link fence. It initially employed 1,200 people and contained “enough high explosive to blow much of Colorado off the map.”<sup>5</sup>

The ordnance depot only became busier following the end of World War II, booming into “a billion-dollar installation” employing nearly 8,000 civilians.<sup>6</sup> As operations in Europe, Africa, and the Pacific wound down, massive amounts of materiel poured into Pueblo. Military expansion during the Cold War further benefitted the depot. In 1951 it became a central ammunition storage facility for the U.S. Air Force, eventually hosting a huge inventory of and maintenance services for Sergeant, Pershing, Redstone,

Figure C.2. Reminiscent of Stanley Kubrick’s film *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Stopped Worrying and Love the Bomb*, the Pueblo Chamber of Commerce embraced weapons of mass destruction as the Pueblo Army Depot become one of the area’s largest employers, rivaling the size of CF&I’s Minnequa Steelworks. Photo courtesy of Wade Broadhead.



Nike, and other missile systems. In 1952 the U.S. Army transferred its chemical weapons stock, most notably 155-milimeter artillery shells containing sulfur mustard agent (mustard gas), from the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, near Denver, to the Pueblo Ordnance Depot. With 780,078 munitions, Pueblo became the primary chemical weapons storage facility in the United States. In 1974, the Army Ordnance Corps took command of the depot, renaming it Pueblo Depot Activity. The Commission on Base Realignment and Closure recommended closing the facility in 1988, but the prospect of destroying the depot's enormous chemical weapons inventory was daunting. By 1994 the Army had removed all conventional weapons and materiel from the facility. The neutralization of the chemical weapons stock and the massive environmental cleanup would span decades.<sup>7</sup>

A dissonance between the quantity and quality of federal and state investment defined the Tortilla Curtain in the second half of the twentieth century. Both Pueblo and Colorado Springs benefitted economically from the expansion of the military-industrial complex during the Cold War. Yet the character of that investment was starkly different on either side of the boundary. On the one hand, the Air Force Academy propelled Colorado Springs to the forefront of the high-tech defense industry, bringing with it high-paying, white-collar jobs, infrastructure improvements, and disposable income that led to staggering suburban expansion. At Pueblo, on the other hand, jobs remained blue collar and suburban expansion was tepid. Even the biggest federal employer in the area, the

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<sup>7</sup> Legg, "Data Supporting the Screening Risk Assessment," 1–2; Anstey, Yost, and Thomas, *In Pursuit of the American Dream*, 39–40; Erin Emery, "Depot's Final Duty: Cleanup," *Denver Post*, December 20, 2000, sec. A, 10.



massive ordnance depot, waned and closed, ultimately leaving a legacy of environmental degradation.

This difference in the character of government spending went well beyond direct expenditures. With much of its population employed by the military or the defense industry in one form or another, Colorado Springs became a hot bed of conservative politics and evangelical Christianity. The evangelical boom in Colorado Springs began in 1984 when Pastor Ted Haggard came to the city to establish what became the New Life Church. Before his fall from grace with a male sex worker in Denver, Haggard ruled evangelical Christendom from his gigantic World Worship Center, oversaw a congregation of 14,000 members, and served as president of the National Association of Evangelicals. Joining him in Colorado Springs was James Dobson and his Focus on the Family evangelical media empire. By 2005 the city hosted over 100 major evangelical Christian organizations and pioneered a new type of worship space derived from the city's sprawl: the suburban mega church.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, federal and state investment in the Pueblo area tended to favor land-intensive uses with lower paying jobs and higher social costs. Paralleling the evangelical boom in Colorado Springs was an incarceration boom in the southern part of the state. Colorado's first territorial prison opened in Cañon City in 1871 and hosted the state's death row through the 1990s, when it moved a few miles away to the new Colorado State Penitentiary. Of the Colorado Department of Corrections' twenty-two state-owned facilities, fourteen—or more than two thirds—are located south of the Tortilla Curtain,

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<sup>8</sup> Jeff Brady, "Colorado Springs a Mecca for Evangelical Christians," *All Things Considered* (National Public Radio, January 17, 2005), <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4287106>.

most in the Pueblo-Cañon City area. Incidentally, the Department of Corrections administrative headquarters is in suburban Colorado Springs.<sup>9</sup> Of the four major federal prisons in Colorado, three are south of the Tortilla Curtain. ADX Florence is the “most notable facility in the entire federal prison system.” It “holds inmates who are considered the most dangerous and in need of the tightest controls.” Among its inmates are Zacaria Moussaoui, Ramzi Yousef, Mohamed Al-Owahali, Richard Reid, Ted Kaczynski, Terry Nichols, Francisco Javier Arellano Felix, and H. Rap Brown.<sup>10</sup>

The Tortilla Curtain has proven itself persistent and powerful, and yet it was not inevitable. The abstraction of Colorado’s rectangular shape failed to account for the topographical and cultural differences that traditionally defined borders. Thus arose a territory of conundrums and contradictions. Nineteenth-century Anglo newspaper writers and travel guide authors attempted to account for these differences, providing a romantic and moral interpretation of the landscape that promoted the state’s mountains over its desert landscapes. This valuing of the landscape and its peoples evolved into a boundary between labor and leisure, silver and gold, brown and white, ancient and modern, Southwest and Rocky Mountain West. As the people on either side of the Tortilla Curtain both contested and confirmed the boundary, it became increasingly enforced, hardened, normalized, and accepted.

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<sup>9</sup> Colorado Department of Corrections, “Colorado Department of Corrections Facilities,” *Colorado Department of Corrections*, accessed April 10, 2013, <http://www.doc.state.co.us/colorado-department-corrections-facilities>.

<sup>10</sup> “List of U.S. Federal Prisons,” *Wikipedia*, April 26, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List\\_of\\_U.S.\\_federal\\_prisons&oldid=549550563](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_U.S._federal_prisons&oldid=549550563); “ADX Florence,” *Wikipedia*, accessed April 13, 2013, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ADX\\_Florence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ADX_Florence).



My first impression of Colorado came from postcards and photographs of Colorado Springs. My mother had traveled there in the mid-1950s, following the Korean War, when my uncle was stationed at Peterson Air Force Base. It was the longest trip she had ever taken away from her tiny hometown in western Pennsylvania and would be for many years to come. Growing up in that same town in that late 1970s and early 1980s, I studied her cartoonishly colored postcards and black-and-white snapshots. I asked her about her memories; a particular favorite was the road covered in jackrabbits on U.S. 40 east of Colorado Springs. Places I had never seen with my own eyes became mythic in my mind: Garden of Gods, Manitou Springs, Cheyenne Canyon, and mighty Pikes Peak.

Thirty years later, I was living in Estes Park, in the mountains of northern Colorado, and teaching in Pueblo. At home I had a colicky infant who slept rarely and cried frequently. Once a week I wearily climbed into my dented, rusted-out Jeep and made the 180-mile journey through Boulder, Westminster, Denver, Castle Rock, Palmer Lakes, Monument, Colorado Springs, and Fountain, to Pueblo. On one of these trips, I stopped at a store in one of the endless, identical, and ultimately forgettable shopping centers that lined the highways from Boulder to Fountain. I returned to my car as an acute panic jarred me out of my zombie-like trance like an electrical shock: I had no idea where I was. I had lost my sense of place. Or more accurately, the Front Range had lost its sense of place. I finally saw Pikes Peak looming on the horizon, that landmark of myth that also loomed over my childhood. I knew vaguely, then, that I was somewhere in metropolitan Colorado Springs. But my sense of panic did not fade until I crossed the Tortilla Curtain. That day I noticed a billboard for Pueblo's Chile & Frijoles Festival framed by the stacks

of the Minnequa Steelworks. This place is different, I thought. Or maybe this version of Colorado is really authentic Colorado.

For all its inequities and injustices, the Tortilla Curtain has helped preserve a sense of place in southern Colorado that is quickly and dangerously fading elsewhere in the state. As John Brinkerhoff Jackson put it, “the boundary is like a skin: a thin surface which is in fact part of the body, part of space which it protects.”<sup>11</sup> The skin of the Tortilla Curtain has protected a body that has allowed an astonishing fusion of Mexican, Native American, African, and European cultures to persist. The result is the differentiated place. “In economics it is the differentiated product that commands a monetary premium,” historic preservation economist Donovan Rypkema told Colorado’s annual preservation conference in 2004:

If in the long run we want to attract capital, to attract investment to our communities, we must differentiate them from anywhere else. It is our built environment that expresses, perhaps better than anything else, our diversity, our identity, our individuality, our differentiation. As the world’s economy is globalized—and it needs to be—it is even more important that the local culture and character isn’t globalized—and it needn’t be.<sup>12</sup>

Thus as much as it is a relic of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Tortilla Curtain, particularly the area south of it, may ironically be key to Colorado’s future.

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<sup>11</sup> John Brinkerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, New Have: Yale University Press, 1984, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Donovan D. Rypkema, “The Economically Competitive Place in the 21st Century” (speech, Colorado Preservation, Inc., Saving Places, Denver, February 7, 2004), 8.

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## CURRICULUM VITA

Adam Adrian Thomas was born on April 30, 1975, in Meyersdale, Pennsylvania. He grew up working in his family's drug store, which his great grandfather opened in 1896. Thomas earned a Bachelor of Science in Journalism from the Medill School, at Northwestern University, in 1997. He worked in corporate communications for the Santa Fe Railway and Amtrak. In 2001, Thomas obtained a Master of Arts in History from Colorado State University, where he concentrated in public history and historic preservation. In 2010, Thomas entered the Ph.D. program in history at Johns Hopkins University, under the direction of Dr. N. D. B. Connolly and Dr. Mary P. Ryan.

In 2002, with his wife, Cheria Yost, Thomas founded Historitecture, a Colorado-based architectural history, cultural resource management, and historic preservation consulting firm. He has surveyed over a thousand historic properties in the state and authored or co-authored over a dozen major cultural resource reports and historical contexts. In 2013, his firm received, with the City of Pueblo and Historic Pueblo, Inc., the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation, Colorado's most distinguished honor in the field, for the Pueblo Neighborhood Studies Project. He also received the Fort Collins Friend of Preservation Honor Award, in 2005.

Thomas received a Dissertation Write-Up Fellowship, at Johns Hopkins, and the Rosser Family Award, at Colorado State. He served as an instructor at Colorado State University-Pueblo and at Mount St. Mary's University, in Emmitsburg, Maryland. He is currently an instructor in the history department at Colorado State University. Thomas is also a trainer for the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC).